"I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE"

"I am the Resurrection and the Life"

A BOOK
OF

Funeral Sermons

BY
LUTHERAN PASTORS

(Sixth Edition)

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE
St. Louis, Mo.
1916

PREFACE.

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The history of this volume of funeral sermons is, at the same time, its apology. It is briefly this: for a number of years individual pastors of the English Synod of Missouri have been urged to publish such sermons as homiletical aids to such pastors as, for want of time or proper equipment, have felt embarrassed when called upon, often on very short notice, to conduct a burial in the English language. These requests were brought to the attention of the English Synod, and as it appeared reasonable and fair that English pastors should supply this want of church-literature, and the Synod had thus, in a manner, been called upon to supply the same, it was resolved at the convention held in the city of Baltimore in 1897 to proceed with the publication of the present volume. Synod's Publication Board, after collecting some material and outlining the general plan of the book, instructed the undersigned to arrange details and com-

plete this volume, which has, in all its parts, been duly passed upon by the Revision Committee of Synod.

The volume, which is herewith presented to the Church for such use as it will find it convenient to make of it, is the joint product of a number of authors, all of whom have approached their part in its elaboration with a greater or less degree of diffidence, and none of whom claims any merit or recognition for its execution. Owing to the joint authorship of this book absolute uniformity of thought and expression and of the exposition and application of Scripture texts will probably be found wanting in it. Besides, a number of the sermons admitted into this book, were written for special occasions arising in the parochial work of pastors, and thus bear the stamp peculiar to such sermons. It was thought advisable to admit them just for this reason, rather than in spite of it. For the same reason two sermons each on the same text were admitted in three instances. However, this lack of uniformity, if it is a defect at all, will be compensated for by the diversity of gifts which has been available for this work. In the compilation of the burial service appended at the end Lochner's Liturgische Monatshefte has been followed.

May Christ, who is the Resurrection and the Life, accept this humble work and bless its use to the

instruction, correction, and comforting of his children in some of their saddest hours in this perishable life.

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me." Ezech. 3:17.

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Isa. 40:1, 2.

By order of the

American Lutheran Publication Board.

W. H. T. DAU.

CONOVER, N. C.

On the eve of Reformation Day 1898.

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FOR INFANTS AND VERY YOUNG CHILDREN

(1-3 YEARS).

I.

How to Submit to God's Will and be Comforted by it.

But now he is dead, wherefore shall I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. 2 Sam. 12:23.

"It is appointed unto men once to die." This truth holds good alike for the tottering sire and the infant in the cradle. However, it is quite natural for grief and mourning to follow in the wake of death, tears and sorrow being, like death, a consequence of sin. For loving parents to experience grief, when their child, a special gift of God's grace, is taken from them, is very much in the order of things and not displeasing to God. Such sorrow we do not find censured in Holy Writ. Hagar, when believing her son about to die in the desert, "sat down over against him a good way off: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she lifted up her voice and wept." How very downcast the pious Shunamite widow was, when the son, whom the Lord had given her at the instance of the prophet's prayer, was taken from her by the hand of death! Imagine the pangs of Jairus, the father, when his daughter was about to die! Again, did not the ruler whose son lay sick at Capernaum, show a parent's grief? Finally, note David's grief at the prospects of his infant child's

death! We do not find this pain censured, nor this grief forbidden.

So on this occasion we shall not chide the parents for feeling the heaviness of the Lord's hand; for, to have the objects of our greatest love taken from us, will and must cause us pain.

Still there is a limit to grief; there is a balm in Gilead. We would recall to you the peculiar, yet God-fearing conduct of David at the death of his child, in that he rose up on learning its death, went into the house of God to worship, and did eat bread. Hence, let us learn from David

HOW TO SUBMIT TO GOD'S RULING, AND HOW TO BE COMFORTED BY IT.

I.

David saw in the death of his child the infallible yet gracious will of God. He said, "now he is dead, . . . can I bring him back?" David had prayed for the life of the child as long as breath was in him, but when death had set in, the will of God was evident. We as Christians wish to live in accord with it, hence we must not murmur against it, or show insubmission by excessive grief. "Thy will be done," we pray, and when we find His will done, let us bow to it. This David did. By his petitions and actions he acknowledged God to be the one that gives us life, and that children are a heritage of God. It follows, then, that He has the right to call the children whom He gave us for a time, to Himself again. Do you say, there is little comfort in this stern fact of God being the ruler and we the ruled? But I pray

you, remember we are speaking not of an irrevocable, inexorable blind fate, but of an infallible judgment of God. What He does is right. So when God acts, even in His omnipotence, such acts being infallibly right, must be for our good.

Beloved "it is well!"
God's ways are always right;
And perfect love is o'er them all,
Though far above our sight.

II.

It is hard, you say, to see God's love in the death of your child? True, death is not in itself a mark of God's love, but of His wrath over sin, and every instance of death we meet with reminds us of the power death has over us because of our sins, and should cause us to humble ourselves in God's sight. God's greatest act of grace and love centers in showing us through the law our sinfulness, so that, by means of the Gospel, we may find the way to Christ and salvation. Visitations like the present one are valuable aids to this end. So the departure of your child, in forcibly bringing these facts to your remembrance, evinces the gracious will of God.

In David's words, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," there is the comfort of the child being removed from all temporal trouble and cares. David would have given his child a kingdom, yet he knew full well, that a royal crown was often converted into a crown of pain, of thorns. A kingdom would not have been in store for your child had it

lived, but perhaps much pain and many tears. Even David was not spared them; and this occasion reminds us anew that we are in a vale of tears and in a world of suffering. This child tasted but very little of it barely becoming conscious of its own existence. So you will admit that its removal from this world's ills is an act of God's love.

"I shall go to him," David says. Because of the gracious covenant of God with Abraham and his seed David expects to find his child in heaven, in the enjoyment of the blessed promises of God's children. Likewise this departed child, having experienced "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost"—Holy Baptism—is now an angel in the realms of light. Your child has attained the end of its creation and existence. Would you recall it? Luther at the death of his daughter Lena said: "If I could recall my daughter and get the Turkish empire into the bargain, I would not do it! Oh, she is well off! 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord'"!

You likewise may say to your child:

Because thy smile was fair,
Thy lip and eye so bright;
Because thy loving cradle care
Was such a sweet delight;
Shall love, with weak embrace
Thy upward wing detain?
No! gentle angel, seek thy place
Amid the cherub train.

A happy reunion, dear parents, is held out to you. "I shall go to him," David said. He knew where he was going. See to it that you follow where your child has gone before. You will henceforth, when thinking of your eternal home, associate with it also the beloved form of your departed child, beckoning you onward and upward, and when re-united with it never to part you will join your child in blessing God for this present hour of pain and parting. Amen.

II.

This Word of God is True.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Jerem. 31:3.

When death comes among us, we are reminded of the vanity of all earthly things and of all merely human consolation. Let even the best friends then come and show their sympathy, what real help do they afford? The precious life is gone; the loved one is dead. How complete the sadness, if there we must "mourn, as those who have no hope"! But Christians must not thus mourn. They are not dependent on human consolation. No; the word of the living God affords the Christian abundant consolation for every, even the saddest bereavement. He who said: "Comfort, comfort ye my people," has also provided that Christians must and shall not be without comfort. His word contains a balm for every sore—a balm, which brings not temporary but permanent relief; for, its healing is applied to our wounded hearts.

It is my precious calling to offer this healing balm to you, whose hearts are bleeding over the death of your beloved child. Tender are the ties that bind together parents and children, brothers and sisters, and when they are broken, hearts will bleed, and "for blood the tears will flow;" but our hearts are then also peculiarly attentive to the Word of Him who has the keys of life and death. Open your hearts to its consolation, as I have chosen it for this occasion. You will find it written Jer. 31:3:—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

THIS WORD OF GOD IS TRUE.

1) As spoken to this child in life and death;

2) As spoken to the bereaved mourners and to us all.

I.

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love." This word of God is true as spoken to this child, now lying cold in death. God who is love has loved this child also with His everlasting love. He loved it from eternity, when He, in Christ, numbered it among His elect. He loved it so, that He gave His only begotten Son, that it should not perish but have everlasting life. But you say, He permitted it to suffer so much, and then to die. So He did, but all in love. Does not His word say: "Whom the Lord loveth, He also chasteneth;" and: "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God?" This

is true of all sinners, who are saved by grace, and of our saved children too, because they also are sinners and saved by grace. They, too, must through the sorrows of earth learn to know the joys of heaven, through death enter into life, that when they come thither, they may enjoy the blessedness of heaven.

"Therefore," He says, "with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." How did He do this with regard to this child? He first drew you, dear parents, to Christ, and when He gave you this child, you brought it to Him in Holy Baptism. There He drew this child to Himself, and "sanctified and cleansed it with the washing of water by the word," and made it His own dear child. But He still left it with you, and in your care, for your joy and delight, and that you should be coworkers together with God in bringing it up for His kingdom. Remember, however, that you were only coworkers together with God; God was doing the drawing; and so He soon began to draw it closer and closer to Himself. How often you thought, now He will take it away; and in your prayers commended it to His love! Thus God drew it nearer and nearer to Himself, until in a moment, in the twinkle of an eye, He translated it to the full enjoyment of His glorious presence forever, and here He wrote on its pallid countenance: "Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." It is for you, dear parents, and brothers and sisters and other sympathizing mourners of this departed child, to read on its pallid countenance, and, when you recall it to memory, to hear: "I have loved thee with an ever-

lasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee."

II.

For this word of God is true also, as spoken to you and to us all. When God takes little children "from this vale of tears to Himself in Heaven," such dealing of His providence has most certainly no sinister or evil intention. Not toward the child, as we have seen; neither toward any one of the bereaved mourners, or any one of us all. His everlasting love which embraces you, weeping parents and brothers and sisters, and us all; His love in which He gave the world His only begotten Son, is not suspended by the death of this child. No; He now speaks to you not only in word but also in deed: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you." The drawing of His love with which He hath drawn this child unto Himself also reaches your hearts and our hearts. He would draw them nearer and nearer to Himself. Our hearts are naturally cold and slow to respond to the drawings of God's love. He therefore sometimes takes a deeper hold on them; He lays His loving hand on a tender spot, that we feel it, and yield our hearts to the drawing of His lovingkindness. We are to learn the curse of sin and death, that we may taste the preciousness of grace and life. We are to learn the vanity of all earthly joys, that our hearts may be freed from them and may seek those which are in Christ Jesus. And how can we learn all this better than by the death of some loved one? For when the bright-

est joy of earth fades and passes away, are not our hearts mightily drawn thither, where joy never dies, to follow those happy ones whom God's lovingkindness has drawn unto Himself? So would He draw us. By our loved ones dwelling there, heaven is to become more and more our home, and God's drawing is to become a home-sickness in our souls. "His lovingkindness, Oh! how great!" Amen.

III.

Why God so Often Takes Away Our Little Ones from This Earth.

I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Jerem. 31:3.

The family-tie is the strongest tie that binds persons together here on earth. The love that attaches husband to wife, and parents to children is greater than any other love. The death therefore of any member of a family, be it of parent or child, naturally causes great grief and sorrow to all the other members. If the family-relation is of the right kind, no husband likes to lose his wife, and no wife her husband; no parents like to lose a child, although they may have several others left; and no child likes to lose one of its parents. For they love one another, and love never likes to part with any object of its affection.

Also you, dear parents, loved your little daughter, whom God has now taken from you, and therefore you did not like to part with her. Your heart was knit in tender affection to the little darling, and her

loss has filled your heart with grief. And you, brothers and sisters, also loved her dearly, that infant sister of yours, and you were very unwilling to let her go. So since her departure there is an aching void in your breast, and many a tear has since then dropped from your eyes.

But, however great may be your grief and sorrow at the death of your little daughter and sister, however tender may have been your love to her, there is One who loves her still more than you could have loved her, and it is this great love for her which has prompted Him to remove her from your midst. Of this we have a testimony in the words of our text: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Guided by these words let me now show to you

WHY GOD SO OFTEN TAKES AWAY OUR LITTLE ONES FROM THIS EARTH.

The reason for this is

1) Not His anger, but

2) His lovingkindness towards them.

I.

It is a sad truth, my dear friends, that when God takes away grown persons out of this life, when He tears father or mother out of the family-circle, when He suddenly extends to a young man or woman the icy hand of death, that this is not always a sign of His love. Death is to them very often a messenger of God's eternal wrath.

When such grown persons have had no other care

than for the treasures and pleasures of this life, forgetting the cares for the treasures that moth doth not corrupt nor rust eat away, then their untimely death is a work of divine anger and wrath. To them apply the words of our Saviour: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"—Or when such persons have striven only after honor with men and for an easy life, neglecting the care for the life to come and for the honor with God, which can be acquired only by repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, then their untimely death is a sign, that God's long-suffering has come to an end, their death is for them the most terrible punishment of God's holiness and justice, for He thus casts them forever away from His face into everlasting misery and contempt. If young men and women have thought only of enjoying their youthful years, if they have sacrificed the fragrant blossoms of their youthful lives to the goddess of pleasure and lust, intending to offer the withered leaves of their old age to God and their Savior, then their untimely death is like a flash of lightning from the hand of their angry judge, who thus tears them away out of their enjoyment and pleasures into everlasting misery and torments.

But such is never the case when our little ones are taken away from this world. The cause of this is not God's anger. It is true, also our little children are not guiltless and holy, for they are born sinners. But Christ has also died for them, has wiped away the sin which they bring with them into the world.

And He furthermore, in Holy Baptism, clothed them with the robe of His righteousness, so that in the eyes of God they become perfectly holy and righteous. Thus these little ones become Christ's own brothers and sisters, the children of His Father, and heirs of eternal salvation. And this heavenly Father now loves them much more than human parents can love their children, He loves them with an everlasting love, as our text tells us. Ah yes, before the foundations of the earth were laid, he loved them already and ordained them for heaven. Moreover, He shows His love for them in various ways. He sends His holy angels to watch and protect them. He is angry with those who offend them. Yea, He says in His Word that "it were better for such persons if a millstone were hanged about their neck and they were drowned in the depths of the sea." And on the other hand He says of those, who treat them kindly: "Whosoever receiveth such a child in my name, receiveth me." How, then, could it be His wrath, that prompts Him to take them away from this earth? Nay, that is impossible! On the contrary, our text states the reason for this when it says: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee," i. e. taken thee away from earth.

II.

If a person were locked up in a dark and damp dungeon, and somebody would come and unbolt the iron door and conduct him into a beautiful, light room to unite him with his dear relatives and friends:

would he be inclined to construe this as an act of anger on the part of his liberator? Or if somebody were to raise you from bitter poverty into a state of wealth, from deep contempt to high honors, from grief and trouble to joy and happiness, from illness and weakness to health and strength: say, would you not consider such deeds as deeds of great love towards you?

Now, what else is this life than a damp and dark dungeon, where our soul is pining in the fetters of sin? What else is this evil life than bitter poverty, where we must appear as naked beggars before God every day? What else is this life than misery and trouble, never-ceasing sickness and constant dying? And what, on the other hand, is heaven but a beautiful hall in which are assembled all the elect of God in everlasting union and never-ending happiness? What else is it but a place, where God's children are supplied with an infinite abundance of treasures far better than this earth can afford; where there is unceasing joy, never-interrupted health and vigor and everlasting life?

Oh, is it not truly lovingkindness, therefore, when God takes our little ones away from this earth of misery and trouble and transfers them to a world of happiness and bliss? He foresees all the troubles and trials that await them down here, therefore he takes them away before they can be touched by them. He sees the serpent of sin stealthily approach them, and He takes them up in His arms and carries them to a place of safety in their Father's house. He sees

the overwhelming flood of perdition, as it comes rushing along threatening to drown them, and He takes them and carries them up to the high hills of heaven, where they cannot be reached by that dangerous destructive flood.

Oh, ought we not rather to rejoice, therefore, than weep over the death of our little children, when we know that they have been received by Christ in Baptism and that He has now taken them to Himself altogether. When we know that they are now safe from all the dangers and troubles that beset us in this wicked world, that they have entered the eternal bliss of heaven, without first tasting the bitterness of this evil life. Meseems they call down to us from heaven: Weep not, dear parents, weep not, dear brothers and sisters, for we are safely laid away in our heavenly Father's bosom, and are only waiting for you to follow us.

May God help us whom He has yet left in the strife and turmoil of this world, to fight the battle bravely to the end, so that, when death comes to release us, we may join the saints that have gone before us. Amen.

IV.

Thy Will be Done on Earth, as it is in Heaven.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Matt. 6: 10.

Again we must exclaim with Moses, the man of God: "Lord, thou turnest men to destruction and sayest: 'Return, ye children of men' . . . Thou car-

riest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up: in the evening it is cut down and withereth." Such is the state of the whole human race, it is cut down like the grass of the meadow. The old, the young, the wise, the simple, all must sooner or later quit this life. Loved ones may stand around our couch to hold us back, but they cannot—go we must. Oh, momentous hour when we quit life! for, as the tree falleth, so shall it lie to all eternity. Oh, painful hour of departure, the dissolution of body and soul! Oh, all-important hour of death! for, upon it depends either everlasting happiness and bliss, or eternal punishment and woe. Why must we die? Moses says: "We are consumed by thine anger and by thy wrath are we troubled." O Lord! It is sin that caused death to come into the world, for "the wages of sin is death."—Here also death has claimed its victim, the coffin yonder contains the mortal remains of one, who lived but a few years in this world and has now taken his flight to the realms beyond. And we, in the presence of this sad scene, can but repeat the words of the Lord's prayer:

"THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN!"

Note

1) The Lord's will has been done to this child, and
2) The Lord's will shall be done to us.

I.

The words of our text are taken from the Lord's

Prayer, from that sweet prayer which we should, according to our Saviour's express command, pray always. Since He taught us to pray on this wise, therefore, we should not let one day pass by without saying: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." It is the Lord's will that has been done; the will of that Lord, who has power over life and death; of that Lord, in whom we live and move and have our being; of that Lord, who spake on the first day: "Let there be light," and lo! there was light; of that Lord, who speaks and it is done, of that Lord, who spake to this child: "Come to me," and behold! it came; and thus the Lord's will has been done!—It was God's will that this child should die at this age, for we read: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." The sparrow is a bird whose life is little regarded by men. But what says the Bible? "Not one of them shall fall on the ground without the will of my Father." Yea, what man regards a hair of his head, whether he has one more or less? Yet God has numbered them all, and without His will not a single hair can fall from our head. If His care and providence go so far, that He looks to the sparrow, that He counts the hairs of our head, could the death of this child have taken place without His knowledge, will and consent? Indeed not, for man is so much superior to the sparrow and hairs of our head that God cannot overlook him.

Let us pause here and receive divine consolation.

God's will has been done. Now He knoweth all things; He knoweth when we deserve punishment, and He also knoweth when best to apply it, for He is omniscient. He has deemed it best, and so let His will be done! He foresaw what perils, bodily and spiritual, this child would be exposed to, what dangers of losing that faith which was implanted in it in Holy Baptism. Before His view was the dark veil of the future drawn aside, and He saw the manifold ills, sicknesses, and diseases, and said: "Child, thou shalt not know these," and so His will is done.—And what a bountiful blessing it is for the deceased that God took him from this life. For what is this life? Is it not a parched desert and strange land, a temporary dwelling place for the believer, who is a pilgrim? What saith Moses? "The days of our years are three score years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow." Labor and sorrow—that is their strength. All that have lived and tasted life can testify to the truth of these words. One sorrow follows the other; one disease the other; one disappointment another; one mishap another; and so on until death. Have you not yourself tasted the emptiness and shallowness of this life? Where can you find real pleasure, real enjoyment, real happiness ouside of that taught in the Scriptures? Nowhere, nowhere, for all is vain, saith Solomon. This life of misery this infant has escaped, and is now dwelling in realms of light, in heaven, where he is free from all evils of body and soul, enjoying with angels and saints the

presence of the adorable God; where there is joy in abundance and gladness beyond description; where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away;" where our mouths shall be filled with singing and laughter; where sorrow never enters, where all is peace and love! Ah, is he gone to this place, to the home of many mansions, then let us rejoicingly say: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord," for His will has been done!

II.

But the Lord's will shall also be done to us, as we pray: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." We are standing in the presence of an open coffin containing the lifeless corpse of a child. This circumstance teaches us an awful lesson. It shows us that the hour will come—and alas, who knows how soon! —when your body shall also lie cold, pale, lifeless in a coffin, but your soul, where, oh, where shall it be? If you persistently neglect the care of your soul in this life, then it shall not be where this child's soul dwelleth; it shall not be where our mouths shall be filled with laughter; it shall not be where the heavenly hosts, where cherubim and seraphim are dwelling; it shall not be where the Saviour is; it shall not be where God is; it shall not be in heaven, but—alas, alas—in hell, the pit of eternal punishment.—Take these two truths home with you to-day and ponder

over them in your heart: 1. That thy hour of departure will, and must come sooner or later, it may be years distant, it may be but a month, a week, a day, an hour, a minute off, we know not; but come it will; and 2. I propose this question to you: Will you be prepared for it? ready for eternity? If you are not yet, hasten and escape to the mountains, whence cometh your help; flee to the Rock of Ages, cleft for you, and do not turn back lest you perish on the way; believe on Jesus Christ, who came into this world to save sinners; this is the only help, the only aid, the only succor for the dying, nothing else can save you, whatsoever it be. Do you feel a longing, a desire for help? Is this wish possessing your heart: "What shall I do to be saved?" Here is God's answer: "Look unto me and be saved." It is but a look; oh, look, dear friend, and be saved! Happy thou art for looking, for this look is eternal life, the look of faith. It is the dawn of a new day in your dark soul, a glorious beam of that light which shines in the celestial realms, the break of eternal day; it is the beginning of faith, nay, faith itself, but very weak and frail, therefore nurse it and feed it with the sincere milk of the Word of God, i. e. read and hear the Word of God when and wherever you can, and you are well equipped for the vale of death.

May the will of God also be done to you, dear mourners. By the sudden death of your dear child He speaks a warning word to you especially. Your child is in heaven: brought there by the angels, and now is extremely happy; but you should learn that

God has some good purpose in view in doing this. Have you strayed away from Him, then let this lead you back; have you neglected His Word and Sacraments, let this make you more prompt and zealous; have you not loved God above all things, do it hereafter; have you perhaps thus far not believed, let this be a warning to you that the day of grace is soon spent by you, this is the eleventh hour, the twelfth cometh, then all is lost; have you been faithless, now is the time to be faithful, or perhaps never. If you receive this, then God's will shall be done to you also.

Now the God of all grace and mercy, of all comfort and consolation, console you with His heavenly grace, strengthen you with His help, give you after days of mourning days of sunshine, gladden your heart in all things, and when the hour of your departure has come, may He be your staff and comfort, and may you then be reunited with him who has gone before you. Grant all this, dear heavenly Father, for Christ's sake, who reigneth with Thee in equal power and glory, very God and very man forever and ever. Amen.

V.

Address.

Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Mark 10: 14.

To part with a dear child, with the only child—to see the joy of your life and the delight of your home sink into an early grave, that is an affliction for par-

ents so great and painful that words cannot describe it. When such a great misfortune has come upon us, we poor mortals are generally at a loss what to think of the great God and Ruler of the universe. We are tempted to say, Why, God, dost Thou such things? Why dost Thou not spare the young and take to Thee the old and feeble? Why dost Thou at a blow take away all the joy of a poor father and mother? Why dost Thou nip the flower in the bud and take away from its parents and friends such a promising child?

But who are we to criticise our divine Maker? Who are we to tell the Almighty how to rule and govern this world? Are we not ashes and dust? Do we know what is for our own good? Do we not often find that we are mistaken in our opinion and judgment?—No, my friends, the only correct and proper thing for us to do in such sore distress is, to say with Job, "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord," to trust in our God, firmly believing that His dealings with us are just and right and, though painful and hard to bear for the present, will prove beneficial in the end. And to strengthen you in this comforting belief let me call your attention to the words of our beloved Saviour Jesus Christ, which we find written Mark. 10:14, where He says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."

You know the occasion when the Lord said these blessed words. You have often seen the picture, the

Lord Jesus seated in the midst of a group of children of different ages and sizes, laying His hands upon them and blessing them. It was on this occasion that His disciples rebuked those that brought their children to Jesus. They told them to go away with their children and not to trouble Jesus. They could not see what Jesus was to do with babes brought to Him upon mother's arms. He was a teacher whose divine sayings would benefit those that could understand what he said. But what could He benefit children whose mental faculties were not developed as yet and who could not comprehend His words? And what are we told of Jesus? He was much displeased at what he saw His disciples doing and said to them, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." From this we see, Jesus is the children's greatest friend. His desire is that parents should bring their children to Him that He might bless them. And it is more than a desire. It is a commandment given to all parents.

Now, dear parents, did you obey Christ's command? You did. You heard the voice of Jesus say, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," and then you did bring this child to Jesus in Holy Baptism. You had the children baptized with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Jesus was invisibly present then and there, and He laid His divine hand upon your little daughter, and He blessed her. By the washing of regeneration and

renewing of the Holy Ghost He made her His own and gave unto her eternal life. From that day the kingdom of heaven was hers, given, presented to her by a gracious Saviour and Redeemer.

But once more did the voice of Jesus say to you, Suffer this little child to come unto me and forbid it not. It was day before yesterday while you were sitting at its little bed and watching the stream of life slowly ebbing away. Then and there Jesus was again invisibly present, and He took the ransomed soul of your little daughter, the soul that He loved dearly and would no longer permit to remain in this wicked world, the soul that He wished to guard and keep from all the sins and troubles of this life. He took that soul from all pain and misery, and placed it into Paradise, into the heavenly mansions, where there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, but glory, happiness, pleasures for evermore.

Behold then, my friends, you have a token in heaven. By the departure of your dear little daughter to those beautiful realms above, you have been connected with heaven more closely and more intimately than you were before. You must know and feel the more now that heaven is your home, your true home, your everlasting home. Strive then to get to heaven. Believe in Jesus the Saviour who says, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." And may the Lord grant us all His grace to say with a true heart,

Jesus, Thou art mine forever,
Dearer far than earth to me;
Neither life nor death shall sever
Those sweet ties which bind to thee.

Amen.

FOR CHILDREN

(3—13 YEARS).

VI.

The Believing Confession of an Afflicted Christian:

"Nevertheless I am continually with thee."

Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Psalm 73: 23, 24.

It is probably known to most who are here assembled that the Lord has repeatedly visited the family, with whom we mourn to-day again, with painful losses: they have already buried several promising children, who died at a youthful age. Also the little boy which we are now to accompany to his last resting place gave promise of becoming a dear young Christian. Last Sunday he still attended his class in our Sunday-school, together with his brothers and sisters, and until a few days ago his parents had no thought of the nearness of his end. Now the object of their fond hopes lies cold in the embrace of death; their hearts are sore; their lips fail to express the bitterness of their unexpected loss. It does seem as if the weight of heaven had fallen upon them, and God had turned from them in anger. If now they should turn and renounce God, there are men who would justify their action.

My purpose is to show that the present bereavement could not in the least justify the thought of such an action, but that every detail connected with it counsels the very opposite. I find in our text

THE BELIEVING CONFESSION OF AN AFFLICTED CHRISTIAN:
"NEVERTHELESS I AM CONTINUALLY WITH THEE."

For this confession our text offers three reasons:

1) The Lord holds the believing Christian by his right hand;
2) He guides him with His counsel;
3) He afterward receives him to glory.

I.

When Asaph, the holy singer, wrote the words of our text, he was in great straits: his flesh and heart nearly failed him. He was beset with serious doubts as regards the justice and impartiality of God's dealings with men. He had been comparing the ease and good fortune of worldly men with the constant worry and sorrows of believers, and he was vexed to see the great mass of men living in utter disregard of God's Word and in open defiance to his declared will, and doing so with impunity, while the believers, who were at pains to walk so as to please God, were in continual trouble. "When I thought to know this," he confesses, "it was too painful for me." But his thoughts were given a sudden turn: he began to observe the end of the wicked, and exclaimed terrified: "How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream

when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image." In the strength of the Lord he now rallied, confessed his hideous doubts with unmitigated remorse, and from out of his griefs said: "Nevertheless I am continually with thee." He had seen that outward ease and worldly success are not criteria of God's love, and that temporal afflictions are not true indications of the divine disfavor. The hand of God, the guiding interest of the Lord may be wanting in the former, while it is clearly manifest in the latter, if a person will only take time and patience to look. Asaph, namely, arose from his inner distress with his conviction: "Thou hast holden me by my right hand."

Asaph had ventured into territory where it is dangerous for man to be. He had desired the happy outward state of the children of this world. He had studied their circumstances, and his heart had become enamored with their ease and splendor. He had not seen the danger that lurked beneath all this tinsel of earthly glory. He had not known that he was walking on the brink of a terrible chasm chasing a gaudy butterfly; he was not aware that he was inhaling the odor of a deadly nightshade when bending admiringly over the good things of the children of men; beneath the flowers over which his feet were leading him, the poisonous adder lay lurking, but he had not seen it. Then when of a sudden his eyes were opened, he beheld with affrighted mien the danger he had been in, and recoiling from the object of his former admiration he exclaimed with grateful wonder: "Thou hast

holden me by my right hand." While in his heart-burnings and doubts he had been wandering away from God, God had silently followed him, allowing him seemingly to go as he pleased, and yet tenderly averting the worst consequences of His guardian care.

You have been on an Asaph's journey, my beloved mourners. You have asked me, and you have asked your friends: "Is it not too hard to bear?" And when we urged you to wait for further signs of God's favor to you, you would shake your heads. You had been so often disappointed that your very doubts seemed a virtue to you. Really, it is a miracle of God that you have not turned infidels; that in the last moments of your little son a ray from heaven fell into your hearts, which showed you that the future which you had planned for W.—was a beggarly state compared with the future into which his heavenly Father has now conducted him. God has in patience allowed you to wander through the mazes of fearful misgivings concerning His righteous judgments, but His right hand has holden you. It is by His grace that you have resigned your heart's delight to His keeping, and that you have desired the comfort of His Word in your bereavement. Now your right hand of faith rests again in the right hand of His promises, and thus you propose to proceed on your journey, walking with God, or rather being led by God in love and mercy.

II.

From his past experience Asaph drew a lesson for his present conduct: "Thou shalt guide me with

thy counsel." He had been keeping his own counsel: that had well nigh ruined him; he had listened to the advice of worldly men: that had only led him deeper into trouble; he had given ear to the suggestions of Satan, only to find himself miserably duped. All this while the counsel of God had been before him too: he had the Word of God, which he could study; there was the temple, which he could attend, and the priest, whose duty it was to advise him. But the counsel, it seems, which came from these quarters Asaph appreciated not; it seemed unreasonable; it sounded unfriendly; it thwarted his wishes. He thoroughly may have disliked that counsel. And yet that counsel was true and trustworthy and loving withal. It was the counsel of the Mighty God, whose name is Counsellor; it was the advice of his best Friend in heaven, Jesus. Succeeding events had proven its sterling worth. Asaph was compelled to acknowledge the superiority of God's thoughts concerning him over his thoughts concerning God. He was constrained to own that it is good to walk by God's counsel in preference to walking by your own or other men's advice. "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel" was henceforth his life-motto. Thus his very afflictions had endeared to him the thing which he had formerly contended against: God's counsel, God's unsearchable ways of dealing with men. He confessed: "I have been all wrong; God has been altogether right; I will follow Him alone!"

You, my beloved friends, have formed the same resolution for your own conduct in the future. The

spiritual gain accruing to you from your earthly loss can be fitly summed up in the words of the poet:

"Whatever God ordains is good!
He never will deceive me;
He leads me by the proper path;
I know He will not leave me,

And take content
What He hath sent;
His hand that sends my sadness
Will turn my tears to gladness."

You have resolved to submit, and that, not like the heathen submit, with sullen resignation, but with cheerful willingness. Your submission proceeds from faith in Him to whom you submit. You are convinced that it is the highest wisdom and leads to blessed advantages to submit to the guiding hand of God, to allow Him to choose your changes, and to appoint for each day its burden and its cheer. Out of stony griefs you are ready to raise a Bethel to God, a memorial of His wondrous love erected upon your own perverseness. By the counsel of God you purpose to walk henceforward. Whatever each day may bring forth, whether laughter or pain, you will take as coming from above, from the Father of lights. You will await His direction for every move you make; you will submit for His ratification every wish and resolve; you will revise, to meet His pleasure, every arrangement concerning your home, your business, your person, or your children's future. In brief, you will have no counsel but His

to guide you, and whatever His Word shall teach you, and His Spirit within you prompts you to do, that you will deem it a high privilege to do.

III.

Our text closes with these words: "Thou shalt afterwards receive me to glory." Asaph here casts his glance forward and upward. He has established his truant heart upon the firm rock of God's counsel regarding him; his purposes have become fixed; the present does not vex him any longer. And out of a calm and serene present he looks ahead to a glorious future. Yes, it is "glory" which he beholds anon! The issues of his tribulations shall be honorable to him. From his seed of tears he expects to reap a rich harvest of joy. At the end of his rugged path he anticipates supreme repose. The cross which he has shouldered in the Master's name shall then be exchanged for a crown. His comrade of the cross, Paul, says: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." And in the same connection he has uttered that well-known rule to which the lives of God's elect are subject: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

It is scriptural, then, for Christians to view their present earthly condition with its worry and woe as a prelude to a brighter ending. Just how much tribulation is needed in the premise of our career below

to make the conclusion of our life hereafter come out satisfactorily, that is a matter which human logic cannot calculate. God who makes the weather for the crops in our fields, makes also the weather for each man's life. He knows how much storm and rain are needed to insure a harvest. He prunes with a master's hand. There is no loss incurred in this life, no wound inflicted, no chastisement bestowed but what has a direct bearing—though we conceive it not—upon our everlasting life. To the end of staying corruption in us, He salts us with the salt of affliction; to cause us to send forth our sweetest fragrance of holiness and devotion, He will crush us in the mortar of tribulation. When He shall have done His work in us, all heaven shall be delighted with the product of His gracious labors, and we ourselves shall never cease wondering that out of so much misery there could ever issue so much glory; that God, in order to set us up on high, took the strange course of first hurling us into the dust; that his psalm-singers around the glassy sea were chosen from the abodes of mourning and grief here below; that he raises those to the noblest heights of an immortal soul's justifiable ambition, who had completely renounced every earthly ambition. Aye, God who is wonderful in counsel, is also marvelous in His working. His every step causes a surprise, and all His doings lead up to the grand indescribable surprise at the end, when he will receive the tear-begrimed, road-stained, and foot-sore pilgrim by the hand at the portals of the golden city, lead him to the throne of the Lamb, and say: "With everlast-

ing love have I loved thee; and when I smote thee, it was because I loved thee beyond all telling."

God shall receive you afterward to glory, my grief-stricken friends. Trust Him, oh, trust Him for a happy consummation of all your earthly trials. Thither where your ward of love has now been taken let your thoughts ascend. There is where believing parents shall meet their believing children again. The crown which His Saviour's mercy has now placed on his head, you also shall wear. God does yet intend to make much of you, though at present you imagined that He cared very little for you; He will honor you to such a degree that you will be abashed by the exceeding height of your coming glory. This He will do for Jesus' sake, who passed through shame that you, and I and all who are here assembled might obtain everlasting glory. Amen.

VII.

Our Comforting Assurance that the Death of this Child is Precious in the Sight of the Lord.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. Psalm 116: 15.

"And when Thou makest up Thy jewels in Thy kingdom, Lord, grant that these children may be there, and may be Thine"—thus the Church prays for her sons and daughters in view of the end to come. This prayer rests on Scriptural foundation. By the prophet Malachi the Lord of hosts has said to the believers in Israel: "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Among the official attire of the Jewish high-priest, there was a golden breastplate studded with twelve precious stones. On each stone the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel had been engraved. This breastplate the highpriest wore, whenever he entered the Holy of holies to make atonement for the people, and thus all Israel was constantly placed before God in a significant manner, as a treasure which the Lord should hold dear, cherish, remember, and guard with jealous care.

Israel's highpriest was a type of our great High-priest, Jesus Christ. He bears on His Saviour's breast all the tribes of the children of men. As their representative He has entered in once into the holy place, before God, the just judge, and has made atonement for them. For His beloved Son's sake God holds a redeemed soul dearer than all the treasures of the earth. Believers are jewels in the breastplate of our Highpriest, and the death of a believer adds lustre to the glory of our exalted Redeemer.

To this truth utterance is given in our text, which I desire to apply to the death of our little Marguerite (which means "pearl"). Let me show you

OUR COMFORTING ASSURANCE THAT THE DEATH OF THIS CHILD IS PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD, AND

1) What assures us of this fact;
2) Why this assurance affords us comfort.

I.

Little Marguerite was born a sinner; flesh born of flesh, she, too, had come short of the glory of

God. The crown of perfect righteousness, which the Creator placed on the head of our first ancestors, when He created them in His own image, did not adorn her brow when she entered this life. In this state she was not fit for the kingdom of heaven, and had she died in this state we should have to leave her present state in the world to come undiscussed. Whatever we should feel like saying of her endearing simplicity and her childlike innocence could not offset her natural depravity.

That we can say of her to-day that she is a jewel in our Saviour's crown is due to her new birth in Baptism. Christ has made her a jewel. With his entire church Christ loved also this child, and gave Himself for it; that He might cleanse it with the washing of the water by the word, and that, with all his glorious church, he might present also this child to Himself, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So Scripture teaches us in the fifth chapter of Ephesians. And this, in short, is the basis of our assurance that the death of this child is precious in the sight of the Lord.

When little Marguerite was carried home from the baptismal font, she had become to her Saviour what that name, there given her, signifies, a pearl. Christ had in Baptism bestowed upon her the precious ransom which on the cross He paid also for her. She had been redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from her vain conversation received by tradition from her fathers; but with the precious

blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. She was bought with a price. The full value of her Saviour's merits was written over to her when she believed and was baptized. Out of worthless dross that saving flood of regeneration made her sterling gold; out of the filth of this world she was picked up by the hand of mercy to become a sparkling ruby of pure radiance with not a fleck in her.

As a precious heirloom Christ has ever since regarded her. Like in the days of His flesh He has taken her up in His arms and blessed her. When she said her prayers she was spiritually in the Saviour's lap speaking to Him as her friend. Angels of heaven were detailed for her guardians to minister to her, as an heir of salvation. Yes, in view of His own work for her, Jesus placed a great value upon her, and her death now is precious in the sight of the Lord. Jesus has clasped this pearl of faith to His heart, and adorns Himself with her as with a jewel.

II.

The comfort which lies in this assurance, beloved parents, requires not so much a mind and tongue to draw it out and set it forth, as rather a believing heart of faith to receive it. Do you not believe it? How shall I interpret the tears that glisten in your eyes? I will take them to be tears of joy over your child's exceeding great fortune, not tears of sorrow over your own misfortune,—if there is room at all for a thought of misfortune in the fulness of your

daughter's glory. God has honored you in thus honoring your child: you have become agents on earth for the increase of our Saviour's wealth in heaven. No more grateful appreciation of your parental care, to bring up your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, could have been accorded you than this, that Christ, for whom alone you reared your Marguerite, has taken her from your hands and placed her whither you wished her to be guided. That is the chief honor of fathers and mothers that through their labor and care heaven is peopled with saints. The death of a Christian child, therefore, reflects honor upon the parents. Nor will Christ forsake such parents in their hours of sorrow. The very children which they have given up to Him, constantly put Him in mind of them. Whatever is too hard for their flesh to bear He will give them increased faith to bear. He will not purchase joy for Himself at the expense of their pain, but will make them to be sharers in His joy, and will do for them what He has done for their children, viz., regard also their death in the faith precious, and with their children place them, too, in His heavenly crown of glory. Amen.

VIII.

The Keeping of Christ's Saying as the Victory Over Death.

"Verily, verily, I say upto you, if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." John 8: 51.

If the phrase "sweet death" is ever applicable, it can be applied to the dying of the child who sleeps

in this coffin. Without any sign of pain, yea, with a radiant smile on his face, he exclaimed: "Mamma, I see Jesus' angels!" gasped—and had winged his way to Abraham's bosom. There was absolutely no bitterness in the cup which the angel of death put to his lips; at any rate, he was made not to "taste death." Gloriously has Christ, by the death of this child, verified and shown something of the meaning of his remark to the Jews concerning not seeing and not tasting death.

The promise which He made on that occasion belongs to us all, and is one of the cherished treasures of our faith in a Redeemer, who died and rose again, to sweeten death for us, and procure for us a happy issue from the grave.

These two things, the Lord's death and resurrection, are the chief pillars on which our Christian faith rests. If Christ had not died our sins would not be atoned for and there could be no forgiveness of sin; and if He had not risen again there would be no righteousness for us in which we could stand before God and no resurrection unto eternal glory. But the Son of God did die, as he had prophesied by David in the 22d Psalm, complaining: "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou has brought me into the dust of death." For what purpose the Lord of glory suffered the pangs of death in all their bitterness, He foretold by Hosea, the prophet, in the 13th chapter, saying: "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction." He died in order to be the death of

death, the destruction of the power of the grave, as the prophet Isaiah said of him: "He will swallow up death in victory." And that He through His death did truly destroy the power of death, this St. Paul testifies, writing to Timothy: "He hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light."

For whom did He bring life and immortality to light? Was it for Himself? Did He stand in need of it? Oh no, not for Himself; He, surely, needed it not. He had life and immortality in Himself from eternity. For Himself He needed not to overcome death; He was the Lord of death. But for whom He obtained victory over death He tells us by the prophet Hosea, saying: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death." Who these "them" are whom the Lord through death ransomed from the power of death the Psalmist tells us, addressing the Lord in these words: "Thou hast ascended on high; thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." Men, and not the pious only, but the rebellious also, He through death ransomed from the power of death. This was the purpose for which He died, that He might divide gifts unto men, among which gifts one of the greatest and most precious is this, that men in death might triumph over death. Therefore, He through death destroyed the power of death that unto us mortal sinners this gift be given, that in the very face of death we might triumphantly say: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Since, then, by His death Christ has gained for us victory over death, how are we made partakers of his victory over death? When do we possess this gift to overcome death, and by what may we in death triumph over death? This the Lord tells us in our text when He says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying he shall never see death." Agreeably to these words let me set forth:

THE KEEPING OF CHRIST'S SAYING AS THE VICTORY OVER DEATH.

Three things must here come into consideration

1) What saying we must keep;
2) What it is to keep Christ's saying;
3) How by this death is overcome.

I.

When it was said of Christ by the prophet that He should "swallow up death in victory" the meaning was not that He should put away death, destroying it utterly, or that He should not die, but the meaning was that in and through death He should destroy the power of death. Likewise, when the Lord here says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying he shall never see death." The meaning is not that such an one should not die bodily, or that he should be received into heaven without bodily death like as Enoch and Elias, but that in death he should not see death and destruction, but only life and sal-

vation; for he truly passes through death as a victor over death, who sees in death not a destroyer, but only a janitor into true life. Now what must a man do in order so to pass through death as a victor over death? The Lord says: "If a man keep my saying he shall never see death." In order to overcome death we must keep a saying. What saying? "My saying," says the Lord. So He distinguishes His saying from all other sayings, His Word from all other words, and this we must be careful to remember. We must distinguish Christ's saying from all other sayings, for only to His saying does He ascribe this great thing that, if a man keep it, he shall never see death.

Now, Christ's saying is not Moses' saying but His saying is the very contrary of Moses' saying. Both Christ's and Moses' sayings are, indeed, contained in the Bible, and both these sayings are of God, but the Scripture distinguishes them as standing opposed to each other. Thus John writes in chapter 1 of his gospel: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and Paul writes to the Galatians: "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." Christ's saying, therefore, is an altogether different saying from that of Moses. Moses says: This do, and if thou do it thou shalt live and shalt be blessed, but if thou do it not thou shalt die and shalt be damned; but Christ's saying runs in this wise: "For my sake thy sins are forgiven and thou shalt be free

from the curse and shalt live. By Moses' saying we can therefore not overcome death, but Moses' saying can only multiply unto us the horrors of death. If a man had kept the whole law, and had failed in one point only, yet Moses delivers him into the power of death as the wages of his sin, even though it be one sin only. All those, therefore, who think they must be able to meet death cheerfully, because they have walked in the law given by Moses and have lived innocently and piously, will find themselves sadly mistaken; for when death comes, then the law proves itself "the strength of sin," accusing man of sin and convincing him that his doom is sealed, because he must now appear before a holy God, before whom only those can stand who possess perfect and spotless holiness. Because of sin Moses' saying consigns us to the power of death and can only serve to increase the bitterness of death, and, therefore, if in death we would triumph over death we must accustom ourselves not to look to the saying of Moses, with its conditional promises and curses, but turn to the saying of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, we must also know that when the Lord here speaks of "My saying," He does not mean all sayings, or every word He uttered when on earth. On a mount He once preached a long and powerful sermon recorded by Matthew in the 5th, 6th and 7th chapters, but in that sermon He spoke as in the person of Moses, exercising the office of Moses and expounding the law, and so on many occasions He proclaimed and explained the law. Such explana-

tions of the law, to which belongs also the example of a holy life which He left for us to imitate, these, though spoken with His own lips, are not properly His saying, not that saying which He here means, not that saying by which we may overcome death. By Him grace came; therefore that only is properly His saying which tells of grace for sinners, that He is the reconciliation for our sins, that by His death He won for us eternal life, that His resurrection is our justification. The Word of grace and reconciliation, the Gospel, that is properly His saying, the saying of which He is here speaking.

If from the saying of Moses, which is also God's inspired Word, much more then must we distinguish Christ's saying from the saying of men. When the pope commands fastings and pilgrimages, when he directs the dying to be anointed with oil, a crucifix to be laid on their bosom, and the like; when moralists say that to do right is the way to heaven; when revivalists teach people they must surely get to heaven, because they have experienced a sensation of sweetness: those are all vain things, which when death comes, afford no foundation, but melt away like snow in the heat of the noon-day sun. So it is with all human doctrines, all teachings not in agreement with the saying of Christ, as Paul writes to the Corinthians that other foundation no man can lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ, and if any man would build on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, it would be tried by fire, and would either approve itself in the fire, or would be

burned up. Such a fiery trial of all doctrine is the approach of death. Then will all human doctrines which are not established by the saying of Christ be consumed like stubble in the fire, and will afford no stay and comfort to the heart. "My saying," says the Lord. His saying alone will be a staff in the valley of the shadow of death. Therefore we must not rest satisfied simply to believe what the multitude believes, neither must we blindly follow the lead of any man; but we must prove all things and make sure that the word which we have is truly the Word of Christ; for of it alone He says: "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death."

II.

But, if we are certain that we have the right and true saying of Christ, how is it kept? What does it mean to keep His saying? Here again we must distinguish well and keep in mind that the saying of Christ is not and cannot be kept like the saying of Moses. Different sayings must be kept in different ways. If a farmer tells his laborers what is to be done, they can keep that saying in no other way than by going and doing the work. But if a man tells his family a piece of good news, they can keep that saying in no other way than by accepting it as true, believing it and rejoicing over it. Moses' saying consists in commands, and can be kept in no other way than by going and doing the work commanded. But Christ's saying is of an altogether different nature. Christ's saying is a message of good news which

comes to us and which tells us that the Son of God became man and suffered and died in our sins, that He broke the bonds of death, rose again and ascended up to heaven to intercede for us with the Father and to prepare a place for us, and that when we die, we shall not go into everlasting darkness, but shall come to Christ and be with Him in everlasting blessedness. Now, how shall we keep that saying? Can we keep it by giving alms to the poor, or by practicing honesty in our dealings? This we should, of course, also do; but that is not keeping the word: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." This saying we can keep only in the same way as we read of Mary, the mother of Jesus: "But his mother kept all these sayings in her heart." Christ's saying we can keep in no other way than by keeping it in the heart, by resting our faith, trust and confidence on it. There is the word: "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." This word I can keep in no other way than by believing it, by holding it as a faithful saying. There is the word: "Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sin; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." That word I can keep in no other way than by believing it and rejoicing over it; for it requires nothing of me, it only tells me that Christ is the reconciliation for my sins. So it is with the whole Gospel. It can be kept only by receiving it as a word of divine truth, and resting the heart's trust and confidence on it. How is it that so simple a thing as keeping His saying in

faith causes us never to see death? It is because Christ will not be separated from His Word. A man may go back on his word, but Christ not. Hold Christ's Word and you have Christ Himself. On this Dr. Luther very appropriately says: "Because the Word proclaims Christ to us, it proclaims unto us Him who overcame death, sin, and the devil. Hence he that grasps and holds it grasps and holds Christ, and, therefore, obtains through the Word that he is delivered from death forever. Therefore it is a Word of life, and it is true whosoever keeps it shall never see death." So said Luther, and it is needless to add anything.

III.

And now, what does the Lord promise to him who keeps His saying? "He shall never see death." And this the Lord affirms with the double affirmation, "Verily, verily, I say unto you." The Lord does not promise that he should not die, but that he should not see death. On another occasion He, indeed, said: "I am the resurrection, and the life: whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," but there He was speaking in a different manner than here, as the words: "I am the resurrection and the life" show. Here the Lord makes a distinction between dying and seeing death. He that keeps Christ's saying shall indeed die, but he shall not see death. Dying and seeing death is not one and the same thing; there is a great difference between them. It is one thing to die, and another to see death. Death is the sep-

aration of soul and body, but seeing death is to see it as death in all its horridness. To the first we are all subject; we must all die, the Christian as well as the un-Christian; but in the latter, the seeing death, there is no such equality; for he that keeps Christ's saying does not see death in its hideousness. And why not? Especially, because of two things. In the first place, he that keeps Christ's saying has in that saying a sure and infallible weapon to ward off those things which make death so awful to man. What are these things? They are: Sin, the curse of the law, and the just judgment of God. These are the things which make death so terrible to sinful and mortal man. And against these things the saying of Christ affords a sure and effective weapon. If sin would trouble him, he that holds Christ's saying wards it off with the plea that Christ, the Lamb of God, has taken away his sins. If the law would accuse him, he answers that the Son of God was put under the law to redeem him from the curse of the law. If the judgment of God presents itself, he appeals to the word: "He that believeth on the Son, is not condemned." So he that keeps Christ's saying has in that saying a weapon to ward off those things which torment the conscience in death, and which make death so bitter to man.

Another reason why he that keeps Christ's saying does not see death, although he dies, is, because by this saying he knows where his soul is journeying to. He that does not keep Christ's saying must, at the very best, die in uncertainty. He has nothing in-

fallible to hold to, no positively reliable guide, and, therefore, does not know where his soul will go, but is tormented with the evil foreboding that it will not fare well. He who does not keep Christ's saying, does not believe His promises, may at the approach of death, indeed, say that he must go, but he can nevermore sincerely say that he wants to go; for only with terror can he think of entering upon so uncertain a journey. One not keeping Christ's saying can nevermore uprightly say as Paul does: "I have a desire to depart." But he who keeps Christ's saying knows where his soul is going; for he has the word of the Lord: "Where I am there shall also my servant be." He who keeps Christ's saying knows, when the hour of death is come, that now he is going to Jesus Christ, the Beloved of his soul and going to Him he is not terrified. So the believer overcomes death, does not see it in all its hideousness, nor taste its pangs in all their sharpness, but holding the Lord's Word and Promise regards death as the entrance into eternal glory. He is like one standing at a river bank whose eye riveted by the beauties of the shore beyond does not see the rushing current of the waters. That this is the death of the believer the Lord establishes solemnly: "Verily, verily."

Blessed, blessed, he who keeps the saying of Christ in his heart, so keeps it that it becomes rooted in him and death itself cannot uproot it; for verily, he shall never see death. Amen.

IX.

Why Christian Parents Should Not Weep Over the Death of Their Children.

The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. 2 Tim. 4: 18.

The death of a child is always a great loss to its parents. All parents that are parents indeed, that have a feeling heart within their breast, love their children; their children are more dear to them than anything that they possess on earth outside of them. Now nobody likes to part with that which he loves, and it is very natural that the loss of anything to which he clings affectionately, which he loves more than anything else, should give him the greatest pain. Who could wonder, then, that the death of a child should cause the most acute grief to the hearts of its parents?

The death of a child is furthermore a loss to its parents, because on it are staked their hopes. They cherish in their hearts the hope that at some future time their children will repay the trouble and pains and worry which they have caused them in their young days, and that they will be the joy and staff of their old age, that they will possibly support them, when their limbs become unfit for work and strength begins to fail. Who, then, can blame parents for mourning, when these hopes are suddenly wiped away by the icy hands of death?

Truly, we cannot think hard of you therefore, dear parents, for grieving over the loss of your child, which during these days you have had to experience.

We can sympathize with you, we can in a measure feel the pain that has rent your hearts. We can also see why your pain and grief should be greater than that of other parents would naturally be. When parents have a number of children around them, then the loss of one, although it is also felt, yet does not cut so keenly and sharply into their hearts and it is much more easily forgotten, than when they have only one child, and that one is taken from them, as was the case with you. For then there is nothing left to fill the vacant place in the heart and home of the parents, caused by its departure, nothing upon which their parental love can henceforth center.

But, my friends, we who are Christians have a comfort even for this great grief. We know who inflicts also this pain, and we know that He does it for our good. We know that also for the child itself death is meant for its eternal welfare. Why, then, should we mourn as such that have no hope, no comfort? Nay, not so. Let us go to the unfailing source of comfort in all troubles and trials and learn:

WHY CHRISTIAN PARENTS SHOULD NOT WEEP OVER THE DEATH OF THEIR CHILDREN.

The reason is:

1) Because their children leave an evil, wicked world;

2) Because they enter a happy, blissful life.

I.

Ah yes, my friends, it is indeed an evil, wicked world that children leave behind them, if they are

taken hence in death. Who can recount all the troubles and temptations that beset a man here in this life. Sickness, pain, toil, trouble, cares, and worry, that is what fills out our days. This earth, as Luther so aptly calls it in his Small Catechism, is but a "vale of tears." We, who are grown up to manhood and womanhood, who have lived in this world a number of years, we all have experienced this to some degree. We all know that nothing is perfect in this life, that everything is marred by some fault or imperfection, that all our joys are embittered by grief and trouble.

These troubles and trials, then, which are so abounding in this world, will never fully cease so long as we may remain here below. We must face them until this life comes to a close. Only death can fully deliver us from them. And nobody can hope to escape them, no one is entirely exempt from them. Some may not be afflicted as much as others, but all get their share of trouble and anxiety. Hence every one, no matter who he may be, must look forward to a life of worry and care, nobody can expect to be rid of these before death takes him out of their reach. Death is the only deliverer from the evils of this present world. This is what Paul speaks of in the text when he says: "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work." He is expecting to die soon and thus to be rid of all the evils of this life.

Oh, who could be sorry for a young child, then, which God takes away by death, before it has become fully conscious of all the troubles and trials that surround it? Who would weep, because it has been

spared a long life of misery here below? Do not weep and mourn over the death of your child, therefore, dear parents, but remember that all its pains and troubles are now forever ended, that it has left this evil world behind and is forever free from all its misery.

This world, which your child has left, is, furthermore, a wicked world. Yea, this is a world in which sin and iniquity abound and reign supreme. Wherever our eyes may turn they meet with the hideous monster of sin in a thousand different shapes. And not only is this world full of wicked people, nay, worse than that, these servants of iniquity also try their very best to lead us Christians with themselves into the meshes and toils of sin. Think of the many and various kinds of snares by which they seek to lead us unawares into the path of perdition! To the one is held out the promise of riches, if he will only consent to make use of dishonest means to acquire them; another is tempted by the allurements of sinful pleasures; another is laughed to scorn and ridicule about his piety and religion in order to induce him to renounce his faith. Truly, thousandfold are the dangers for our soul by which we are surrounded in this wicked world! Great, especially, are the temptations it offers to the young.

And all these dangers and temptations a child is spared, which dies and is thus removed out of their reach. Also your son has been taken away out of their midst to a place of everlasting safety. Oh, can you be sorry for it? Who knows what would have

become of him, if God had left him here! Who knows whether he would not perhaps at some future time have been misled from the way of life on to the way of perdition. Remember, also your child was born sinful, also he was flesh born of flesh. His young heart was not pure and clean by nature, but it was inclined to evil, and who can tell whether he would not perhaps have followed his sinful inclination later and gone astray! Perhaps with all the care and watchfulness that you could have bestowed upon him you might not have been able to protect him from the dangers that would infallibly have beset him in later years. Therefore do not wish him back again into this wicked world, but rest assured that God knew what was best for him as well as for you, and submit yourselves to His will.

II.

Yes, indeed, my friends, it is an evil, wicked world that a child leaves behind, if it is taken out of it by death, but blissful, happy is the life which it is then permitted to enter. Ah, that is a life of everlasting, uninterrupted happiness and bliss. Paul gives expression to this in the text when he says: "He will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom." This is true of every Christian that he enters the heavenly kingdom when he dies, that is also the lot of the baptized children at their death.

Oh, my hearers, how shall I depict to you the blissful state which they enjoy, who have been taken by the Lord into that heavenly kingdom above? How

shall I describe to you, dear parents, the heavenly joy that now swells the breast of your deceased child? Our poor human language has no words fitly to represent that blissful state. Our weak, sinful minds cannot comprehend it! That is a place from which sin and every evil are excluded. There "God shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of the blest; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." From that place of security all troubles and sufferings of this present world are shut out forever. From that place also sin and every form of wickedness are excluded, by which we are surrounded here. There we shall be perfectly renewed according to the holy image of our Creator, there we shall be free from every evil lust, from every sinful inclination and desire. There no Satan and no wicked person can come to lure us into the path of unrighteousness. There we will be perfectly safe from all dangers to our soul. Oh, can you be sorry that your child has entered that state of perfect safety and freedom from all evil?

But this is not all. Up there is also the enjoyment of perfect, everlasting joy. Such joy and happiness does there fill the hearts of the saints, that here on earth we are utterly unable to understand and comprehend it. All the joys that this earth can afford, if they were all brought together and tasted by a person in one moment of time, would be as a tiny drop of water against the mighty seas, when compared with the overwhelming happiness of yonder world. And

that happiness is to last forever! All the poor joys of this earth are fleeting as a phantom, they quickly flit past us as the shadows of the clouds that are driven by a hurricane. But those of the life to come will not be thus evanescent, they will never, never come to an end, they will extend into endless eternity. Oh, therefore rejoice, dear parents, rejoice amidst your tears, that your child was deemed worthy to enter that life of eternal happiness, before it had scarcely tasted the bitterness of this world's sufferings and trials!

Therefore bear up under the loss that God in His wisdom has seen fit to inflict upon you. Your child has gone to heaven, of that you may be certain. For Christ has made it His own in Baptism, and He has now only taken it to Himself entirely, has removed it to that place, where no danger or harm can touch him. And when once your race is ended, when God will send His messenger Death to call you away from this earth, then your child will again be restored to you, then you will meet him up there before the throne of the Lamb and with him sing your joyful Hallelujahs to the praise of your God and Saviour. God grant that we may all escape the snares of this evil world and safely reach that blessed place of happiness and security above. Amen.

FOR CONFIRMED YOUTHS (13—17 YEARS)

a) FOR BOYS.

X.

The Lord Gave, and the Lord Hath Taken Away: Blessed be the Name of the Lord.

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord. Job 1: 21.

It is not without good reason that the Lord has taught us to pray the Third petition: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." It is not always easy for us to submit ourselves to God's will. Our heart is an evil, perverse thing, which likes to go its own way and imagines that its own counsels are always the wisest and best. When, therefore, the ways in which God leads us do not coincide with those we have laid out for ourselves, our heart is prone to rebel against His counsels, and we are not infrequently tempted to do what Job's wife advised him to do in his great distress, to "curse God and die." Especially when trials and afflictions come upon us, when we are plunged into trouble or poverty, when sickness or even death visits our family, we often become impatient or disconsolate.

But it must not be so. We must not despond and despair, we must not become impatient and refractory under the chastening rod of God, we must learn

to bow meekly under His will, to pray with the Saviour in the midst of all trials and afflictions: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Even when death comes and takes away one of our loved ones, we must learn to say with Job in the words of our text:

"THE LORD GAVE, AND THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY: BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD."

1) The Lord gave;
2) The Lord hath taken away;
3) Blessed be the name of the Lord.

I.

It was in an hour of severe trial, a trial the like of which none of us have experienced, that Job spoke the words just quoted. By a divine dispensation he had lost all his temporal possessions in one single day. One messenger after another had come in, each one bringing him fresh news of disaster. And finally, when he had already received information that all his cattle, his oxen and mules and sheep and camels, had been either killed or robbed, there came a fourth messenger and announced to him the greatest of all losses, the death of his ten children in a hurricane. Ah, surely, friends, that was a severe trial of faith, one which would have driven many a one either to despair or to turn his back upon God. But not so Job. He "arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell upon the ground, and worshiped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and

naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Amidst all outward demonstration of grief and anguish Job preserves a calm and submissive heart, which acknowledges the hand of God in his sore affliction and patiently submits to His will.

Let us profit by the lesson we are taught by pious Job, let us learn to follow his example in all our trials and afflictions. And that this may be accomplished, let us apply his words to ourselves. Let us endeavor to find comfort in them in this present hour of bereavement.

"The Lord gave," Job says in the first place, when he hears of the death of his children. That is a truth, which all Christians know and believe, that their children are a gift of God. "Children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward," says the Psalmist. Knowing this, Christians receive their children as gifts out of the hand of God with joy and thanksgiving. Knowing this they also love their children so much more tenderly; they love them for the sake of Him who gave them. But they love them also in the right manner, always placing the love of the Giver above the love of the gift.

Again, knowing that their children are gifts of God, Christians also perform their God-imposed duty toward them. They are aware of it that they cannot do with their children as they please, but that they are placed as stewards over them and are, therefore, in duty bound to bring them up in accordance with the instructions laid down for them by God, the Giver

of them, in His holy Word. Hence they endeavor to bring them up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" they prayerfully seek to train their children to become good Christians, leading them early to Christ, their Saviour.

Now you, dear parents—I am glad to be able to say it!—have thus viewed and do still thus view your relation towards your children, also to the son whom the Lord has thus taken from you. You have brought him and his sisters and brothers up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Having early brought him to Christ in Holy Baptism, you later had him instructed in the blessed truths of God's Word and confirmed as a member of our dear Lutheran Church. Nor did you neglect to give him a Christian training at home, you set him a good example of true piety in your own walk as faithful Christians, you guarded him carefully against all the snares and temptations that beset his youthful feet, you urged him to study his catechism, to read the Bible and other good religious books, in short, you did all in your power to make him a good Christian and a faithful member of the church. And you have been amply rewarded for your care and pains. For he was not only a dutiful, obedient son to you, but what is more, he was a true Christian, a faithful child of God, a diligent attendant at Sunday-School and divine services. Ah, has not your labor been more than repaid? What a sweet comfort it is to you to know now that you have earnestly striven to do your duty towards this child, which God had given you, and to have the assurance

that now the Lord has taken him to Himself into a better life!

II.

For it is indeed the Lord that has taken him from you. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," says Job. These words are also true in your case, and having learned the first lesson, having received this child as a gift from the hand of God and always looked upon him as such, it behooves you also to learn the second lesson now, to bow submissively to the will of God, now that He has taken this gift away from you.

For that it is indeed the Lord who has done this thing to you, you can be absolutely certain. It is always the Lord that takes men away from this earth. He it is alone that has power over life and death. It is He, as the Psalmist says, "that turns men to destruction and says, Return, ye children of men." Job's story is itself a good proof for this. We are told in the first chapter, that it was Satan who robbed him of his children, but he did it by direct permission of God. And later, when Job was himself afflicted in his body, Satan by God's permission could only touch his body, but must spare his life. How plainly does the Lord show here, that He alone has power over life and death. So when we may be certain of this, that whenever or wherever a person dies, it is God that takes his life. And therefore all parents, who are called upon to give up any of the children God has vouchsafed to them, may be sure that God has taken

them. Yes, dear mourning parents, it is God who has also taken your child. Because it was thus decreed in His will and gracious counsel that your son should die, therefore death has now come and taken him from you.

Now we know that, whenever God does something, He does it with some wise purpose in view. His acts are always prompted by wisdom and by love. And you may be sure that he has also done this thing to you with your own and your child's welfare in view. You may not be able to see His reason and understand His motive. Indeed, it is but natural that it should be so. For God's ways are often beyond our comprehension. "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." You do not know why He took your son away, but you will certainly find out "hereafter" why He has done it. Already here below we can conceive of sundry reasons why He may have done it. If he had lived he might have gone astray, might have been entangled in the snares of this world's temptations and thus finally been lost eternally. Or it may be that his future life would have been darkened by great trials and suffering, and to spare him these the Lord snatched him away before they came upon him. Or it may be that it was necessary in order to try your faith or to turn your affections away from this life to the life above and that it was for this reason that he was taken away, so that you might have an object of affection up in heaven to draw your desires and longings thither. These may have been some of the reasons that prompted

God to do this thing, perhaps He may have had others, we cannot tell. But whatever His reason and purpose may have been, it is certain that it was a good and wise one. And when you leave this nether world and enter the one above, then you shall learn what the reason was. There the veil shall be drawn away, there all the hidden counsels of God shall be revealed and laid bare before our wondering eyes. There our mouth shall overflow with thanks and praises to Him who hath done all things well.

III.

But do not put off your praises of God's grace and wisdom until then, my friends. Nay, learn to say with Job already here below: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Yea, learn to say in the midst of this tribulation: "Blessed be the name of the Lord." For we Christians ought indeed not only learn to bow meekly under the will of God in all trials and afflictions, but we can and ought to, learn to praise and thank Him for them. Indeed, knowing as we do that everything He sends us to bear, no matter how bitter it may taste to our flesh, is meant only for our best, for our temporal and eternal welfare, even though we often cannot understand the how and wherefore—knowing, I say that everything is meant for our best, what else could we do than praise God for it? Yes, indeed, we Christians can thank God in the midst of suffering and affliction, while our flesh is smarting under His chastening rod, we can lift up our eyes and hearts amidst tears and thank God for the very trials that are causing our tears to

flow. For we know that the hand which smites us is the hand of love, and not the hand of wrath. If the latter were the case, it could only drive us to despair, but knowing that it is the former, we can gratefully kiss it while it smites us.

Do you also, then, dear friends, even while your hearts are bleeding from the wound that God's hand has struck lift them up to Him in thankful adoration. Ah yes, trusting Him implicitly that He means only your welfare and the welfare of him, whom He has taken from you, learn to thank Him that He has done this thing, learn to thank Him that He has taken your son away from this evil, wicked world to that eternal home of safety, where you are sure that he cannot be lost to you, but is only waiting for your coming to be forever united with you in joyful reunion around the throne of God, where together with him you will then raise your eternal anthems to the praise of Him, who hath done all things well, who has led you so wondrously and yet so wisely here below.

XI.

I am the Resurrection and the Life.

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. John 11: 25, 26.

East of Jerusalem there was a town by the name of Bethany. In it there once lived a happy family of two sisters and a brother. Jesus on his wanderings

to and fro frequently stopped at their house when at Bethany. We are told that He loved the three dearly, for they believed on Him. They confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of God, who should come into the world. You can imagine the happiness in that household where Jesus is a familiar and frequent guest. As this family, consisting of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, lived on in the sweet knowledge and comfort of their Saviour, it happened one day that Lazarus was taken sick. At first, his sisters thought the disease not serious, but in the course of time Lazarus grew worse and worse and Jesus, the all-healing Physician, was not near. They send for Him, but He still tarries two days at the place, where He is. The sickness grows worse and Lazarus dies. Jesus, at a distance, tells His disciples what has happened by announcing to them that Lazarus is dead.

He also says: "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to the intent ye may believe," and he straightway wends his way towards the village. When near the town it is told Martha that the Master is coming, and she hastens to Him, saying that if He had been there, her brother would not have died. Jesus tells her that her brother shall rise again and confirms His statement with the words, John 11, 25, 26: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

The event which happened centuries ago in that little village and by which it became famous, has hap-

pened here. A brother, a dear son has lived a short life. We are standing about his mortal remains, mourning and weeping over the inevitable lot of the human race. Death causes pain; the death of a dear one inflicts a deep wound in the hearts of the bereaved. But unto such our text applies:

"I AM THE RESURRECTION," ETC.

These words contain:
1) A blessed truth;
2) A great lesson.

I.

It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, that says this, and He by His many miracles, such as healing the sick; curing the lame, the blind, the deaf; raising the dead by a word, declared Himself with power to be the Son of God. There was no doubt existing, or possible, for the people that saw him; they one and all admitted that He was a great prophet, the Son of the living God. His disciples firmly believed in His divinity; His friends called Him divine; His Father declared the same from heaven; His enemies, the would-be-wise among the Jews, secretly admitted it; yea, the condemned spirits of darkness were constrained to confess Him the Son of God. He was, He is, and ever shall be the almighty God. And it is He that speaks the words of our text: "I am the resurrection and the life."

This Jesus, who is God and man in one person, begotten of the Father from eternity and born of the

Virgin Mary took upon Himself the sins of the human race; all transgressions of God's commandments were placed upon His shoulders; "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." Man had violated, and does still violate the divine Law daily and frequently, but Jesus took these sins upon Him and suffered for them. The sins of all, yours and mine, made Him bleed, suffer and die. The superhuman weight and burden cast Him into the grave. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him." "He was delivered for our offenses." He went into the dark valley of death on account of sin. But on the third day He rose again from the dead; He resumed life after resting in the grave three days by His power, to declare unto us that his atonement for sins had been accepted at the throne of God. Jesus "is risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept." He is the resurrection and the life. 'Tis a blessed truth.

He is the resurrection; He is life, having immortality and unfading, imperishable, and unchanging life in Himself; He imparts the same to others, so that they need not, and cannot die. Therefore, "whosoever believeth in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live." The man that believes in Him, though dead, yet lives; he has unfading life in Jesus. He cannot perish. Death to him is but the separation of soul and body. What we call death is the departure of the soul from the body, but in reality, it is the soul's entrance into life in heaven. The body we bury out

of sight; it turns into dust and earth; but this dust shall rise again to glory, for the man that believed in Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life.

How happy the man that has faith, true faith in Jesus Christ! "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man (Jesus) be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." These are promises that are made to all believers. They are to live, possess eternal life, and enjoy everlasting happiness.

And herein lies a great comfort for us in this hour of affliction. The deceased was a believer in Christ Jesus. He believed in Him who says, "I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." He assured me of his faith in Christ. He confessed that he was a sinner, but also that his sins were forgiven through the atonement and death of Christ, and therefore he has entered into life, for "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die!" We have no reason to mourn this death, knowing him to be happy, why should we weep? His death is but a sleep. The grim foe, whom the wicked and unbelievers so greatly dread, has nothing fearful

for the Christian; it is as the Scriptures say, a falling asleep; and that it is such, became quite apparent at the departure of the deceased. Before we knew it, his soul had gone hence, and his body, with an expression of peace and rest upon his countenance, reclined upon the couch. No agony, no fear, no dread—a calm repose.

Asleep in Jesus! blessed sleep!
From which none ever wakes to weep;
A calm and undisturbed repose,
Unbroken by the last of foes.

II.

This statement, "I am the resurrection, etc." contains, in the second place, a great lesson. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble." Human life at its best is short and fleeting. It soon passes away; childhood is short, manhood is short, old age is short. The spring of youth is soon flown; the summer of manhood is chased by the autumn of old age. How short is life, how quickly it is spent! "The days of our years are threescore years and ten (70 years) and if by reason of strength they be four score years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away." And in all the stages of life we are ever pursued by death; man may die at any age. He knows that he shall die, but how he shall die, and when he shall die, and where he shall die, is not known to him. This man was taken in the

midst of life—33 years—others have been taken at a greater, many at an earlier age.

How necessary for us to be ready for the summons. The true object of all preaching at funerals can be but this, to tell us to prepare for death; every death teaches us this. Its exhortation, then, is: "Accept the salvation offered." As eternal life and eternal death, heaven and its happiness, hell and its torments depend upon our believing or not believing, let us believe as he did, who has left you; believe in Jesus who is the resurrection and the life.

There is life in a look at the Crucified One,
There is life at this moment for thee,

for "he that believeth in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Him shall never die."

XII.

Confirmed Indeed.

The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. 2 Tim. 4:18.

With the grateful thoughts of Christian parents who are privileged to see their children kneeling at the altar of the Lord on confirmation day, and vowing faithfulness unto death to Jesus their Lord, there will mingle sad reflections on their children's future. Will that vow be kept? Will the confirmation which takes place in our earthly tabernacles be the fore-shadowing of a greater confirmation on a day when the Lord Himself shall admit His confessor, not the spiritual

privileges of the saints in light here below, but to the incorruptible inheritance of the saints in glory? For thousands of young people are every year breaking their confirmation vow soon after they have made it; and when they die in their unrepented sin, their departure does not lead to the great confirmation at which the Author and Finisher of our faith shall immutably fix the everlasting happiness of His believers, so that, like the good angels, who are confirmed in their blissful estate, they cannot be tempted any more or fall away from Christ.

The young Christian whom we shall escort to-day to his last resting place, had recently been confirmed in the faith of our church; i. e. he had declared that, forsaking this evil world, he had cast his lot with those who look for a better world acquired by the suffering of Jesus. And we pronounced him, in Jesus' name, an heir with us of heavenly life. We prayed that "the Lord would deliver him from every evil work, and preserve him unto his heavenly kingdom." That the Lord has now done. The great confirmation has now taken place; he is henceforth confirmed indeed. In an exalted sense the solemn words of the pastor, which declared him a member to the full extent in our earthly church, can to-day be repeated, now that he has been admitted to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For our comfort let us, therefore, connect our present burial service with our late confirmation service. And that the more, because confirmation, that laudable institution of our Church, has proven to the departed an aid to salva-

tion, although it is not a sacrament, or a means of grace.

I desire to show that our departed brother is now

CONFIRMED INDEED.

1) Christ has delivered him from all evil, and declared him a member of the church triumphant.

2) Christ has preserved him unto His heavenly kingdom, and invited him to partake of all its privileges.

I.

For now has the Lord, in whom this child believed, said: "I in my own name and power declare you to be a member of the church triumphant." Is it hard for you to look upon his departure in that light? Stop and think! What did those words, "I declare you to be members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church" mean? Surely not only that your child was privileged to be a member of that visible communion, which we know by that name. Surely, not only that his name was to be found on the communion roll of the church. It meant more. It meant that he, by his own voluntary act and profession before all the world, was now a member of God's kingdom of grace, into which he had entered by Baptism. It meant his name was to be found, not only upon the register of this, our church, but in God's book of life. It meant and declared that he was by faith a member of the church invisible; and in hope, a member of that portion of it which is on high, the church triumphant.

His early death is therefore but God's fuller confirmation of his blessedness; God's almighty seal upon

our poor efforts in his behalf. His death is a consummation of what God began in his Baptism, carried on in his Christian training and completed by now taking him to Himself. His death is in reality an answer to our prayer, "that they, to all Thy pleasure may continue to grow in Christ, our common head, and come unto a perfect man in all wisdom, holiness and righteousness."

True, you no doubt did not expect to see your prayer answered in this manner. You, perhaps, unconsciously, marked out the manner of God's granting it by desiring a long and useful Christian life for him.

But does not God know best? Does not He, who knoweth how we carry our treasures in earthen vessels admit the constant dangers of losing them as so many who once swore fealty to Him, have lost—does not He know best? Is not his the better lot? He has out-stripped us in the race, he has heard, not his Lord's servant, but his Lord himself say: I, Christ Jesus, who redeemed thee; I, who adopted thee as my own; I, who sanctified and preserved thee in my Gospel kingdom of Grace, I declare thee to be a member of my church triumphant, there to dwell in righteousness and purity forever.

II.

Yes, more than that, I "will preserve you unto my heavenly kingdom and invite you to partake of all its privileges, goods and blessings for your . . . eternal salvation."

Who can describe them! What pen can portray, what brush depict, what tongue recount the privileges, goods and blessings which our Lord has prepared for us in His Church triumphant? What eye can see, what ear hear, what heart even faintly grasp the transcendent beauty, glory and fulness of these privileges, goods and blessings, which are kept for us in heaven? True, we already now possess these things in hope, but our vision and appreciation of them is so much blurred by our infirmities, that any description, even that of John in Revelations, calls up only a faint image of their true character and glory.

But think of this your beloved child, standing before his Lord and our Lord, clad in that dazzling white robe of His righteousness, looking into his Saviour's loving face with eager, expectant gaze, listening to His precious declaration and invitation: "I declare you to be (not by faith, not merely in hope, but in reality), I declare you to be a member of my church triumphant." "I invite you to partake of all its privileges, goods and blessings, for your eternal salvation." Ah, now he is confirmed indeed. Now he is blessed indeed, not for time, but for eternity.

Beloved, it has often seemed to me that we grown children are more than fond of playing "make believe" with God. We bring our children to God in Baptism. We stand in His presence and say: "Lord, we bring Thee our child. We beseech Thee to receive it. Embrace it, bless it, lay Thy divine hand upon it as Thou didst in the days of Thy flesh. Take it for thine own. Give it true faith and everlasting life." And

when our Lord takes us at our word we weep and lament; aye, we sometimes even murmur against Him.

We try to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We teach them to consecrate themselves to Him; to say: "Thou art mine, I am Thine, no one can us sever;" we assist them with our prayers, and then when our gracious and allwise God does take them to Himself, we are often filled with an unholy desire to rebel against this very thing which we so often in word and deed invited.

Ah, I would not have you to stand beside this open grave with hearts of stone, crushing down every tender thought and emotion. For death, "the wages of sin," is verily a "king of terrors." But look beyond the grave. Mourn, not as they which have no hope, but as Christians who look upon death as a gate to life.

Look up to that blessed place and try to hear with the ears of faith those blessed words from the Saviour's lips: "I declare you to be a member of my church triumphant." "I invite you to partake of all its privileges, goods and blessings for your eternal salvation." Therein is comfort. May God help you find it. Amen.

b). FOR GIRLS.

XIII.

The Righteous Taken Away from the Evil to Come.

The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness. Isaiah 57: 1, 2.

"There is something mysterious about early deaths. They present to us a problem insoluble by our poor reason. They seem at first sight inconsistent alike with the Divine wisdom, power and love. They look almost like the frustration of God's plans and purposes, a failure in His sovereign designs. It is the architect just completing his work when that work comes with a crash to the ground. It is the sculptor putting the finishing strokes of his chisel on the virgin marble, when the toil of months or years strews the floor of his studio. It is the gardener bringing forth from his conservatory the long husbanded plants in their freshness and beauty to bask in the summer sun, when a frost or hailstorm suddenly comes and in a moment they are gone. How strange!"

"Oh, we can understand the removal of a hoary-headed sinner, the man who has grown gray in iniquities; the world is well rid of such, for they lived like the fabled upas tree, only to diffuse around them moral corruption and death. We can understand the removal of the aged Christian, the veteran standard-

bearer who has fought the fight and entered into his rest. None can wonder at the shock of corn cut down in its season, fully ripe. But why destroy the green ear, the budding flower? Above all—for such thoughts will, despite a better faith, force themselves on the crushed spirit,—why has God, the Great, the Good, the Loving God, nurtured affections in the human bosom only prematurely to blight and destroy them? Why has He created tender ties—causing affection to twine its fibres around the roots of the heart, and then, when these fibres are strongest, and affection deepest, why does He wrench the loved tendrils away."

Thoughts such as these, no doubt, now fill your hearts, my friends, and are pressing for some answer. Will you go with me into the sanctuary, into the Word of truth, seeking some solution of the problem? Will you put the question to God? Ah, if you will only do that, you need not lack a reply, for quick and sure comes the response to your aching heart:

"THE RIGHTEOUS IS TAKEN AWAY FROM THE EVIL TO COME. HE SHALL ENTER INTO PEACE: THEY SHALL REST IN THEIR BEDS, EACH ONE WALKING IN HIS UPRIGHTNESS."

1) The righteous is taken away from the evil to come;
2) He shall enter into peace, etc.

I.

"The righteous is taken away from the evil to come." It was so in the case of Josiah, the boy king

of Israel, whom God compassionately spared those sorrows of siege and torture and captivity, plunder of holy treasure and firing of the cities of his kingdom by "taking him away" before the coming of proud Babylon's armies. Ah yes, we now see that "he was mercifully taken away from the evil to come."

But, pastor, you will say, how does that apply here? Surely, our child had every comfort, every privilege that loving hands could provide. Surely we would have done our duty in the future as we did in the past. What is this "evil to come?"

I do not know. Nor did the patriot band who bore their young king bleeding from the fray, know of the impending evil. Had they known of all that was about to befall their land it would have moderated that loud wail of sorrow which rose from the valley of Megiddon. But they did not know. God knew, and He knows best. Surely the subsequent history of Israel proves that.

May not this be true here to-day? True, we know of no evil to come. The future is veiled from us. God graciously places His almighty hand over His children's eyes and leads them through the labyrinth of this present time. It would therefore be both wrong and foolish for us to try to tear His hand away and look into the dark future, if such a thing were possible, instead of submitting wholly to His loving care and guidance. Fortunately the future is mercifully hidden. Were this not so, we no doubt could often see more of God's love and wisdom in these early

graves. As it is they remain a riddle to our unaided intellect.

But here is the word of God. "The righteous are taken away from the evil to come." Who can tell if the loved and early lost had been spared, what trials might have been in reserve for them? Aye more, what sins and temptations might have overtaken them? Who can tell what pain your home was spared by this early removal? God, who foresees all, knows best. Better, far better, that the lamb be early taken from the fold, with its fleece unstained, than left to pine upon blighted herbage and come in footsore, fleece-torn by its wanderings amid the thorns of this present time. Yes, God knows best. "The righteous are taken away from the evil to come."

II.

But the words of the prophet give also a positive explanation of the mystery of early death (verse 2): "He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness."

Josiah, when he died "entered into peace." This is a beautiful Old Testament evidence of the immediate blessedness of the departed righteous. They enter into their peace. Their walk is not arrested, even though the body rest in the "bed" of the grave; it is only transferred to another sphere. It has "entered into peace."

If the death of the young were annihilation; if the orb underwent eternal eclipse; if there were even a

period of intermediate suspension of consciousness and active energy; then such removal would be mysterious; the blank would be a blank indeed. But their sun has not been blotted out from the firmament; it has only sunk behind the line of our visible horizon. They enter into peace, God's peace, there to walk before Him in uprightness. Heaven, then, is but an expansion and development of this life. "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." How then can we speak of early death at all? That "early" is a term only relative to the body—that which rests in the grave awaiting the resurrection. The immortal soul walks before God. That is true life.

Life is not to be measured and computed by formal arithmetic, counted by days, months and years. No, the fourscore years of a misspent life is no life at all. It is a mere bankruptcy of being. Whereas, that is the truest length of days, where, it may be for a brief and consecrated season, some young life has shown gloriously for God. Which, then, is the real length of days? Is it the short life of a child, such as your daughter, who in her Baptism was early brought to the Saviour, who was fed upon the green pastures of His precious Word, who vowed allegiance and faithfulness to her Saviour and is now entered into the peace of God, leaving the sweetest of memories behind her? Surely the latter is the real length of days.

Therefore, my friends, we can stand at the grave of this young believer and almost hear this truth ringing like a chime from heaven: "The righteous is

taken away from the evil to come." We can listen as to the whisperings of angels, hovering around this grave, hallowed by our Saviour's burial: "She shall enter into peace;" "she rests on her bed;" "she shall walk in uprightness."

Let us therefore say: "She asked life of Thee, and Thou gavest it to her, even length of days forever and ever." Ps. 21:4. Lord, Thou knowest best. Thy will be done; yea, blessed be the name of the Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from Macduff. "The Harp taken from the Willows.")

XIV.

Weep Not; She is Not Dead, but Sleepeth.

Weep not, she is not dead, but sleepeth. Luke 8: 52.

It is not quite two weeks ago that I stood here, and some of you now present sat there and we spoke of the fading year and of the dawn of this New Year, 1893. Naturally our thoughts turned to the future; "here," we said, "here we are taking the step which carries us into the New Year. Oh, if we could raise the veil that God has thrown over this coming year!" Yes, who was then among us who could refrain from asking the question: What will the New Year bring me, what has the Lord in store for me? Here again are 365 days and each of them has 24 hours; what may not happen in those many hours!

"What," said many a careworn soul, "what, will there be tears to shed, will there be days of sorrow and grief among those many days?" "Will there be

partings?" And those of us who are Christians said: "Those 365 days are dark to me, but He that has promised to be with me always even unto the end of the world, He will be with me also in the coming years, as He was with me in the past." We felt, even though we did not express it in so many words, we felt what the poet says:

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life or death
His mercy underlies.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

And now we have traveled only a short distance in the New Year, and here we see what the Lord had in store for us; He had tears for us all, dear brother and sister, a parting for you, dear children, a parting for you, her classmates, for us the teachers, for the whole congregation, a parting for me the pastor. One of our faithful ones has taken her leave to be with Christ.

Oh, what shall we do? What shall we say? How can we express the grief that moves our inmost heart? Let us hear what the Lord, who took her, saith to us; let us allow Him to speak to us here at the early departure of our beloved daughter and sister in Christ; we find His words in the Gospel according to St. Luke

in the 8th chapter, where we read as follows in the 52nd verse:

"Weep not, she is not dead, but sleepeth."

"Weep not," said Christ. How now, does Jesus wish to forbid our tears? Does He wish to tell us that it is sinful to weep over the departure of those whom we love? Does He intend to forbid us to express what we cannot help but feel? Can He mean that we are to stand cold and insensible at the graves of those who were dear to us as our own lives? No, He could not have meant that, He that wept himself, when He heard of the departure of Lazarus, His friend. No, He does not forbid our tears, His meaning is rather this: Weep not, as though you had lost her; weep not, as those who have no hope; weep not, as though your daughter and sister were gone forever; weep not, as though she had died; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

Those who stand at the graves of their loved ones without hope, weep in despair; their tears roll, and they are without comfort; to them it is death, nothing less; they believe that the cord is broken, never to be united again; they believe that the loved ones are wrested from their arms never to be given back; they believe they have heard the last words from their lips, and now they see nothing but a dark, unfathomable abyss from which there is no help; in short, they are in despair, they are without the faintest comfort: "Oh," says Jesus to us, "weep not, as those ungodly people weep," weep not as though there was no faith and no glorious hope in your heart, but rather weep

as though she had departed on a long journey to some distant shore, where she is now waiting to receive you, after you will have traveled the same road." Oh, therefore, though we must shed tears at seeing her go and leaving us behind, yet let us think, amid all those tears,—let us think of that glorious day, when we also shall have arrived in the habitation of our heavenly Father. Let us think of this, that now we have her in heaven and when our summons comes we may say, I am going where Christ is, my Saviour, where the saints are, and where she is, and thus heaven is brighter to us, because she is there, and it will always be to us the home of the Saviour and her home, no strange place, but a well-known, cheerful, glorious place of peace and rest and bliss. Yes, she is not dead, she is only resting, sleeping; sleeping until the sound of the last trumpet shall waken her and us. And think of what a joyful awakening that will be! Here you saw her in this wicked world, here our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Think of the dangers, the temptations that surrounded her. Oh, when we consider how many and earnest prayers of a loving mother and a god-fearing father, how much constant attention from a pastor it takes to protect our young Christians from the temptations of the world, and their own flesh and blood, then we feel almost relieved to know; "Now at last she is safe in heaven, beyond the reach of sin and Satan."

When you saw her here in this vale of tears, you saw her in weakness, in sickness, in pain, in trouble,

in anxiety, and even when she smiled the thought came: how soon can that smile die away and tears take its place. No, this was no place for her tender and sensitive nature, but now when you will meet her again, you will see her in those almighty, loving, comforting arms of Jesus; you will see your child and sister at peace, at rest; no sigh shall ever pass her lips again; no tear bedew her fair countenance; there we shall see her and her eyes will meet ours and those lips that joined us here in the hymns of the church will join us there in the sweet melodies of the angels to the praise of Christ, our Saviour. Oh, when we think of that, then we can say: "Yes, I cannot help but weep to think that for a time I must be separated from her, but in my tears and weeping, I feel already the joy of seeing her again never to part from her any more, never to have her taken from me." Therefore let us moderate our grief, let us not weep; she is not dead, but sleepeth.

But there is another reason for Christ's "Weep not." He wishes to say: "Weep not," as though she was taken away too early. 'Tis true the Lord has taken her away in the days of her youth, when youthful health and beauty shone in her countenance, when life sparkled in its most brilliant colors, but though she was taken as a budding flower is broken, yet we know that God and her Saviour knew the very hour when it was most profitable for her, for you, for us all. Christ's eyes beheld her here on earth among the thousands, and out of them all He chose her, He could wait for her no longer, and He gave the com-

mand to his angels: "Open the portals of heaven and let her come in whom I have chosen to be with me in eternal joy and happiness; henceforth no grief shall touch her, no sorrow ruffle her peace, she shall battle no more in that wicked world; let her rest." Yes, while we were thinking of her future, and many plans were made, Christ saw her and chose her and said, "She is for me and my heaven," and thus she entered in unto the joy of her Lord.

And now, what I say, I say to all. Weep not so much over her, she is not dead, but sleepeth; but weep rather over yourselves. How soon may I stand here again to speak at your coffin, and could I then say of you what I have said of her? She knelt here not quite two years ago and made her confirmation vow, and she kept it. She shrank back from the rough touch of the world and in maidenly grace and modesty she ran her course here on earth. Yes, she as the first one of those who vowed faithfulness unto their Saviour at this altar is saved and has entered glory. She has fought a good fight, she has finished the course, she has kept faith, henceforth is given her a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the Just Judge, will give her on that day. Oh, fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, friends and strangers, let us strive these few years to depart as the deceased, namely, in the sure and firm faith in Christ; for the last time that I saw her in life and asked her, on whom she rested her hope of salvation, whether she rested in Christ, she answered: "Yes." There on Mount Calvary where He paid His precious blood for her and died, thither her

eyes of faith were directed. And though she had no gross neglects, for ever since her confirmation she has attended the service, and only a short while ago she was found among those who received the Lord's Supper, yet she knew that she was not perfect, but that if others saw not her faults, yet she and her God knew them, and therefore she took her refuge to her Saviour Jesus.

And she showed her faith in her life and behavior. She was a dutiful and loving daughter, a kind and affectionate sister, a gentle and true friend, a modest girl and a devoted Christian, and was willing to serve her Lord so that a part of her last strength was spent in serving Him here in the Sunday School. Yet when she knew that she must appear before the Judge, she wished to be only a poor sinner resting in the Saviour and confessing it ere she passed away.

Oh, that we may be granted such a sweet, peaceful Christian sleep! May the Lord find us also watching, so that we who have been parted from her here may after a short time be again united with her for all eternity. Amen.

XV.

Address.

Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. Luke 12: 37.

Parting from those who are dear to us is always painful. We feel a pang in taking leave from those whose very presence is a joy to us.

But unspeakable anguish is added when death separates us from one whose very life was entwined with ours, when death parts us from those whose joys were our joys, and whose sorrows were our sorrows. At such a time it seems that one purpose of our life is gone, yea, that a part of life itself has been wrested and forced from us. Such is the sadness and sorrow in an intensified degree that fills your hearts, my beloved, as you look upon the lifeless form of one who was so near, so dear, to you, who filled a place in your deepest affection that no one else can fill—you feel the smarting pain that such a sad parting by death and the grave has inflicted. The separation from a dear friend and from a loving sister,—above all the parting of a mother and child, has brought this distressing sorrow to your heart and filled your eyes with bitter tears of sorrow.

But there is another sorrow that threatens at this hour to spread a gloom, a deep gloom over our souls. We are tempted to weep, not only because of our bereavement, but to lament also because of her who has departed. No doubt such thoughts as these have arisen in our hearts. How sad that one so young and happy must leave this world. Ah, she has been cut down as a beautiful flower that had scarcely begun to bud. Her day closed before the sun, which rose in such splendor and with such promise of future brilliancy, had reached its zenith. Before the spring of her life had spread its full grandeur of blossom and growth around her, her days were suddenly ended. While many of her friends and companions were left to bloom

and grow on, she is laid lifeless into the grave. Such thoughts, I say, may threaten to overwhelm some or all of us with regret for her. But however sad her fate may appear to the unenlightened reason of the worldly-minded—if we view her lot in the light of Holy Writ—we shall find no cause to weep for her, but we shall learn that "the lines are fallen unto her in pleasant places; yea that she has a goodly heritage." We shall learn that her lot is not one to be dreaded, but one to be desired above even the chief joys of this world. For of all of us we may say: May the Lord when He comes find us watching and doing His will; but of her we may truthfully say: "Hallelujah! The Lord found her watching and doing His will and He has taken her from labor and sorrow to rest and to bliss and has raised her from the position of His handmaiden here on earth to be a princess in His everlasting kingdom of glory."

Is there one among us who thinks: "Ah we could apply to her the words of the text with more confidence if she had been granted some time to prepare herself for death? But, as it is, she was summoned so suddenly, without a moment for prayer, without a single word of direction or of consolation from pastor or parent, without warning; in one moment she was taken from active life to appear before God." Now, it is true we all wish for a time of special preparation for our end. Yet it is also unquestionably true that a true Christian is always ready. And, praised be God, of this we may feel confident, that she, over whom we now weep, was such a true Christian. Her life is to

us a reassuring witness that her heart was at peace with God. She heard and learned the Word of God gladly. Her delight was in the law of the Lord, and in her conduct we saw the beautiful fruits of such devotion to God's Word. She was like a tree at the rivers of waters that bringeth forth its fruit in its season. Her quiet Christian behavior, her submissive obedience, her loving attachment to her mother, her devotion to duty, these were not the products of a carnal mind, but gave evidence of the blessed work of the Holy Ghost upon her heart. And though we can record no last verbal expression of her faith, no prayer uttered in the hour of her death, yet we can say: "The Lord, when He came, found her doing," and that is after all the very best that we can say of any one who is dear to us. Words, though they be the most beautiful expression of faith, will be to works but as leaves are to the fruit.

The Lord found her in the midst of that work which was the duty assigned to her, not an occupation chosen from whim, but one that was the choice of parent and child, and in which she labored diligently and faithfully. While engaged in the duties of this calling, viz., while at school where she had just recited with credit a difficult lesson she was through sudden failure of the heart removed from all labor to the rest of those who die in the Lord. How emphatically may we then and how joyfully do we say: "The Lord found her watching and so doing." He found fruit—not merely leaves, but fruit. It is not two weeks since she knelt at this altar to receive new strength

for the work of life in the blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and now in this strength of the Lord she has passed through the valley of the shadow of death. Indeed we need not hesitate to say that she was found faithful and prepared, and therefore God Himself pronounced her blessed. What of it if the world pities her, and bewails her fate—God pronounces her blessed.

Wherein then does the blessing consist? Her bliss consists first in this; that the Lord found her. It does not say of a Christian that death finds him, but the Lord finds him. So also the Lord found her, not death. For death is the wages of sin, but her sin had been forgiven and she had through Baptism and faith been delivered from the power of death, and as her conversation was in heaven, so she also awaited from thence the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. And He has come, the heavenly bridegroom has found her and has led her from this strange land to His own home in heaven. Is that not the consummation of the bride's deepest wish and longing? Is that not blessedness and happiness abundant?

But our text continues to describe that blessedness when it declares: "Verily, I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them." The departed Christian shall be made to sit down to meat and the Lord Himself will minister to their joy, rest and glory. Then will true joy and rest begin in all its sweetness and perfection. We know that the life of a Christian here is one of toil in service. Our joy

here is a joy in hope and mixed with much patient waiting and tribulation. Our pilgrimage is endangered by temptations of sins, and the lusts of the flesh; our journey is obstructed by difficulties without and weaknesses within. From all this Christ has delivered her. She has entered into her rest, she has been taken from battle to victory, from struggle to triumph, from weariness to rest, from sorrow to gladness, from hope to fruition!

Truly, the lines are fallen to her in pleasant places, indeed she has a goodly heritage. After a short pilgrimage she has been called to the continuing city of God; without feeling the scorching heat of the day in this world of toil, she has entered into rest; without shedding the bitterest tears in this vale of tears, she has been taken to God's bosom where He shall wipe away every tear from her eye and where fullness of joy and pleasure are hers forevermore. God grant that we may again be impressed with the necessity of watching and praying always, so that the Lord may "find us so doing," and that we may also become partakers of the inheritance that passeth not away. Amen.

FOR YOUNG MEN

(17—25 YEARS.)

XVI.

Two Reasons for Cheerfulness in Suffering.

I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to compare with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Rom. 8: 18.

(For a family that has suffered much.)

Faith makes the Christian, love manifests the Christian, affliction tries the Christian. Faith and love are approved only when tried and purified in the oven of affliction. Only by sufferings do we become tried, settled, unwavering in true godliness. Because this is so, therefore God lays the cross on the shoulders of all His children, sending them many and manifold afflictions. This cross David, the man after the heart of God, experienced abundantly; therefore he says: "My sorrow is continually before me," and Job, whose piety God Himself praises, says: "O that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together; for now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea." This rule God invariably observes: Those whom He loves, He also chastens. According to God's eternal purpose all His children must be "conformed to the image of His Son." But what image did His Son bear on this earth? He was a "man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," so much so that He was obliged to cry

out: "Innumerable evils have compassed me about." Since, then, Christ, the head, was a man of sorrows acquainted with grief, can it appear strange, if the Christians, His members, must also become acquainted with afflictions? Should we regard it something strange if the disciples of Christ the Crucified must also bear the cross? Surely, if we would be the Lord's servants, we must wear the Lord's livery. We Christians cannot expect to go through this bodily life without the suffering of Christ abounding in us, and whoever is not willing to suffer with Christ, cannot be His. This the apostle distinctly declares in the verse preceding our text, pronouncing us "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." If we suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified with Him; but if we are not willing to suffer with Him, we can also not be glorified with Him.

Now this we Christians know, and after the inner man we are ready, yea we count it honor to suffer with Christ; but there is also another man in us, the old Adam, and he hates the cross. He is always busy to make our afflictions appear so great, so unbearable as to discourage us and to persuade us to flee the cross of Christ. Because of the weakness of the flesh the heart often becomes impatient in afflictions, but that we should exercise ourselves in patience and should daily grow therein, this is the will of God. Therefore the Bible is so full of comforting words for the suffering Christian to teach us patience in hope. The text before us points out to us:

TWO REASONS FOR CHEERFULNESS IN SUFFERINGS.

These are:

1) The shortness of our sufferings.

2) The glory which shall be revealed in us.

I.

The first reason why we Christians,—for the apostle is here speaking of the children of God,—should be patient in suffering, he expresses in the words: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." From these words we should first of all learn that by our sufferings in this world we do not merit the glory in the world to come. Frequently people argue that, because they have suffered so much in this world, they must be rewarded by freedom from suffering in the world to come. In this way people make their sufferings the cause of their salvation and so they deceive themselves; for it is Christ's suffering alone which saves us, and not our own. The soul which makes its sufferings its plea before God, will not partake of heavenly glory. For the apostle does not say, that the sufferings of this present time are worthy of the glory to be revealed; he says the direct contrary, that our sufferings are not worthy even to be compared with that glory. This is to what Paul exhorts, we Christians should regard our sufferings in this world a small matter in comparison to the glory in store for us.

To see this clearly we must consider both our sufferings and the glory to be revealed. How does Paul describe our sufferings? He calls them "sufferings of this present time." He describes them as a temporal thing lasting for a time only. Our afflictions last for a time only, they end with time and therefore are not worthy to be compared with the glory of eternity. Even so long as we live in this world, suffering does not continue always; "for the Lord will not cast off for ever: but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies." Storms will come upon all God's children, but the Lord has appointed their time and duration; they blow over and the sun will shine again. Therefore David says: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

And even though the Christian's afflictions should continue all his lifetime without interruption or respite, nevertheless they remain a temporal thing, ending in death. Though lasting for eighty years or ninety years, they have their appointed limit: for the moment the soul departs from the body the Christian's sufferings are ended forever. Why then should we make so much of the sufferings of this present time? They are sufferings in time, for a time. No man is likely to suffer more for Christ's sake than Paul did; yet he here includes himself and represents our, hence also his own sufferings, as a small matter, and to the Corinthians he writes: "Our light affliction which is but for a moment."

II.

How could Paul esteem so lightly the numberless afflictions, the severe sufferings to which he was subjected? It was not because it did not hurt him when he was stoned, or smart him when he was striped, or torment him when Satan's messenger buffeted him; he had flesh and blood as well as we and suffering was painful to him as well as to us; but why he was so cheerful in all his sufferings he tells us when writing to the Corinthians: "We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." Paul knew that he was called to suffer with Christ in this present time and thereafter to be glorified with Him; and he looked not at the sufferings surrounding him, but at the glory to come, considering that his afflictions were temporal and the coming glory is eternal. Such is the art which we should learn, in which we should daily strive to become more practiced. Not to occupy our minds with our afflictions, calculating how heavy they are and how long they last, but to have our eye fixed on the glory in store for us. In view of that glory we will learn to say: What great thing is it if I suffer for this present time, since eternal glory shall be mine; the struggle will come to an end, the crown is imperishable and fadeth not away; the labor is short, the rest long; the sorrow brief, the joy without end. Wherefore we should cheerfully say with Luther: "What is my suffering, though it were ten times greater and heavier than it is, compared with eternal life unto

which I am baptized and called? Surely it is not worthy to be accounted suffering in comparison to such great glory which shall yet be revealed in me."

This glory is to be "revealed in us;" it is a thing of the future. And yet we shall use it for our present comfort. Our troubles which lie upon us now, the losses of this moment, this new affliction before our eyes right now, is to be a silent admonition to us to look up. The faith of Christians deals with future events as if they were present realities; and that is its essence. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." A Christian has what he is going to have, and knows what he is going to know. There is no hap-hazard move in all his trust. "God has said so; therefore, it is so!"—that is, in a few words, his spiritual basis for his conduct under any condition of life whatsoever. This ever-present conviction of the glory to be revealed caused Luther to declare that Christians are for the greater part in heaven now, namely, because by faith they have sent all their affection ahead to heaven. Wherever this faith prevails there can be no lasting sorrow of the flesh, and no sorrow whatever of the spirit. No cloud of sorrow can put out the sun of our future glory. Beyond the darkness of the present the light of eternity shines undimmed and gives to our sable sorrows a golden background. Amen.

XVII.

The Renewing or Transforming of the Body.

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. Phil. 3: 20, 21.

As man is by nature he is not fitted for heaven, the fellowship of the angels and the communion of God. This fact is clearly demonstrated by the history of our first parents; for when they had sinned, they were expelled from the Garden of Eden as no more worthy to dwell in paradise and to have communion with God. Thereafter the Scriptures tell us that Adam "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image." As the father was, so was also the son, and because the father was unfit for paradise therefore the son, bearing the likeness and image of his father, was also unfit for paradise. The image of sin which Adam bore, was stamped on his son and so it continues unto this day. If the children of Adam would have been born innocently and without sin, justice would have required that the Garden of Eden should have been reopened unto them; but because they were born in sin, they were barred from approach to the tree of life as well as their father. Therefore, as man is by nature, he is not fit for heaven; and before he can enter there, he must undergo a complete change. The image of sin must be effaced, and the image of God must be

restored in man, before he can be found worthy to dwell with God in one tabernacle.

For this, indeed, the whole Bible is proof. Because a change must occur with man before he can have communion with God, therefore the prophet preached repentance and faith in the promised Redeemer; therefore John came, baptizing unto forgiveness of sin; and in unmistakable terms did Christ bear witness tc the same when he said to Nicodemus: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and to the disciples He said: "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Man born into this world must be born again, he must be changed from his natural estate into another estate before he is fitted for heaven.

Now man consists of two parts, soul and body, and both in soul and body he must be renewed. The soul is renewed by birth out "of water and of the Spirit," and this renewing is continued by the sanctification of the Spirit, and when the soul so renewed departs from the body it forthwith is made perfect and comes to God. But the body must be also renewed; for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." This mortal body must undergo a change before it is fit for heaven. How the body is changed the Lord tells us in the 12th chapter of John, saying, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The body must decay and must rise again, transformed from the

image of sin; then only is it fit for heaven. Of this transformation of our bodies the apostle speaks in our text.

To this transformation I would direct your spirits in this hour of sadness. We are about to consign to the abode of corruption a young Christian, who has been cut off in the beauty and vigor of early manhood. This beautiful handiwork of our Creator which death has disfigured, God shall, for Jesus' sake, refashion into a far more glorious body; and the place to which we are carrying this cold corpse, and which will today be the scene of great distress, shall on the last day become the scene of a great miracle. Allow me, therefore, to speak of

THE RENEWING, OR TRANSFORMING, OF THE BODY,

showing

1) When and how it will take place, and

2) How man is prepared for it.

I.

The apostle in our text says: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." The simple truth which the apostle here reveals to us is this: The bodies of those who, while on earth, have had their conversation in heaven, will be glorified. At His appearing the Lord will awaken them out of

the dust of the earth and, transforming them, will make them like unto His glorified body. Surely a great, a grand prospect is set before us Christians, which is well worthy of our consideration.

The time when this change will take place, is the Lord's final coming. When the heavens will be rolled up like a scroll, when the earth and all that therein is will be burned up, when death will deliver up its victims, when all things save alone the Word of the Lord will be changed, then will also our bodies be changed. This time for the change the apostle fixes very explicitly, 1 Cor. 15, writing: "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." When the Lord will appear unto judgment then both the bodies of those asleep in Jesus will arise glorified and the bodies of the saints yet living on the earth will be changed.

So, that which shall be changed is "our body." We must not so construe the word change as though this body which we now have should be destroyed and another body different from this would be given us. But this same body which we now have will be altered; it will receive new qualities, new attributes, it will enter on a new mode and manner of existence, but it will be the same body. That in the resurrection we shall not receive a new or different body, but that this same body shall rise again, the Scriptures clearly testify; for so Job says: "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another." Job declared, in the body with which

he sat in the ashes and which he scraped with a potsherd he would see God. The same is demonstrated by a clear example at the crucifixion of Christ; for when Jesus expired on the cross "the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the grave after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Those same bodies which had been bedded in the graves rose again. Neither can it be another than the same body, because justice requires this; for St. Paul writes: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." That same body which has sinned, shall suffer punishment; and that same body which on earth suffered for Christ's sake shall be rewarded. This is the requirement of justice. Therefore not another, but the same body which we now have, shall rise again.

This body the apostle here describes by adding an adjective: "Who shall change our vile body." He describes the body in its present condition as a vile thing. The human body is, indeed, one of God's most glorious creatures; it is "fearfully and wonderfully made," but sin makes it vile. It must be clothed and cleansed, and is subject to manifold weaknesses and repulsive diseases; yea, often does the body of man become so odious an object that others shudder to touch it or even to look upon it. The body of king Herod while yet living became so pestiferous a thing that no one could bear to remain near him. Peo-

ple make much of the body; they indulge and adorn it, but finally it decays and is eaten by the worms. But the vilest of all is that the body is full of low and vile lusts, so that Paul writes concerning carnal desires: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." The sensual lusts which are excited in the body even of those led by the Spirit, are so many and great that they must be kept under with a strong hand.

This our vile body Christ will so change "that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." These are short words, but they comprise much. Our bodies will be changed into the image of Christ's glorious body. How will our bodies then be? Oh, for realizing this! But while we are in this present vile estate it is beyond our comprehension. Yet the Scriptures tell us some things about it, how our bodies will then be. Here the apostle limits the glory of our bodies; for he says that they shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body and he does not say that they shall be equal to Christ's body. Christ's body was received into unity with the God-head and therefore it was glorified with divine glory, as He prayed the Father: "Glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Christ's body received divine glory and divine attributes, as omnipotence, omnipresence, and the like. Our bodies will not receive divine glory and divine attributes so that they would be equal to Christ's body; His glory will be infinitely greater than ours, yet shall our bodies be like unto His glorified body, as again He says to the Father: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and

I am glorified in them." We will be glorified not with a glory which is of us, but with a borrowed glory, even with Christ's glory; His glory will shine in and through us. We will stand dressed in Christ's glory and therefore our bodies will be like unto His glorious body.

What qualities and attributes our bodies will then possess we can to some extent gather from the qualities and attributes of Christ's body in His state of exaltation. Now Christ, after His resurrection, though He did at once eat food to convince the disciples of His identity, needed neither food nor drink. Our bodies will need neither food nor drink, we being like the angels, as the Lord said to the Sadducees: "In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven." After his resurrection the form of sinful flesh was taken from Christ's body. Our bodies will be without sin. In this life this vile body is continually drawn hither and thither by evil affections and sinful emotions, but in our glorified bodies sin will be no more. Hence our glorified body will no more be subject to fatigue, weakness, pain or death; for these things are the result and wages of sin, and when sin is purged out, then must follow what St. Paul says: "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," even as the Book of Revelation testifies: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

When Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." Our bodies shall be similar; for of the time of our glorification the Lord says: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father," and unto Daniel it was said: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." With His glorified body the Lord passed through rocks and walls and ascended up through the air. When glorified our bodies will no more be so clumsy as they now are; they will be quick as the light and will know no hindrances; for St. Paul writes: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body," and at another place he says: "The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." Oh, imagine this our body relieved of its sinfulness and cumbrousness, and celestial glory shining in it, rushing like a flash of light through the firmament to join the company of the elect at Christ's right hand! Let the great of this earth wear golden crowns and load their bodies with silks and satins: the world passeth away and the glory thereof. We look for another glory, the changing of this vile body, whereby it will be made worthy to dwell with God and the Lamb in one tabernacle.

And this mighty change will come about suddenly; for St. Paul writes to the Corinthians: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a mo-

ment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." When the trump of God will sound, the bodies of the sleeping saints will suddenly start up from their graves, and the bodies of the believers yet living will begin to shine with heavenly brightness. Then will the burying-grounds of the Christians rival in glory the fields of Bethlehem in the night of the Lord's birth when the glory of the Lord illumined the darkness.

Here carnal reason will wag its head and say: How can this thing be? how can a body mouldered to dust centuries ago suddenly shine like a star? We Christians are not guided by reason, but by the Word of the Lord, and here is the Lord's word that He will do it "according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." It will not take Him long, neither will it cost Him great exertion to transform our bodies. He who rose from the dead and glorified His own body, is plentifully able to transform our bodies, and every one who will deny the glorious resurrection of the sleeping saints, thereby gives testimony against himself that he does not truly believe the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; for so Paul concludes and says: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." Since Jesus rose from the dead, it necessarily follows that those who have fallen asleep in Jesus must also rise again; and as He rose in glory, they must also rise in Glory. Now we know that Jesus is not dead, that He lives and reigns. Therefore, although we see that our

bodies grow old and feeble; although we know that in death the body becomes so vile a thing, that it must be hid away under the ground out of the sight of men; yet knowing that our Jesus lives, we cheerfully say with the apostle John when he writes: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." As many of us as are led by the Spirit, are even now the children of God; and though it is now not visible in us, yet the time will and must come when we will also be manifested before heaven and earth as the children of God.

II.

But these words remind us that the changing of our bodies at the coming of Christ is only the final consummation of that great work which must begin already in this life, the restoration of man. If our bodies are to be changed into the image of Christ's glorious body, our hearts must have been changed before we die. On this allow me but a few sentences only.

When the trump of God will resound, land and sea will become alive with people; for the millions buried by the flood and the myriads that have lived since, will all come forth from their graves, but the great multitude of them will bear the image of Satan, and only a very small remnant comparatively will shine in the image of Christ's glory. Who will be with this

glorious company? Not those of whom St. Paul here writes: "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." All those who hate the truth of God, all those to whom the friendship of men and worldly advantages are dearer than Christ crucified: all those who make the belly their god, walking in the lusts of the flesh and following carnal enjoyments; all those who glory in things which bring honor before men, but are a shame before God; all those whose hearts are set on earthly things; all these will also come forth out of their graves, but they will come forth bearing the image of Satan. Woe will be unto the world on that great day. All the enemies of Christ, all the seekers after carnal enjoyments, all the proud, all the earthly minded—their portion will be in the lake burning with fire and brimstone.

But from these will be separated a glorious company, even they who bore the cross of Christ on earth, hated and despised of men, because their conversation is not earthly and does not suit the world; the company of those who "look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." Looking to Jesus is the beginning, looking for Jesus is the continuation of our restoration which is consummated by the changing of our bodies. We are vile both in body and soul, but look to Jesus; He cleanses from sin, He clothes the soul with righteousness. Look to Him as your Saviour and

your soul shall live. Look not downward, the earth will pass away; look upward, there Jesus will appear. Look to Jesus hanging on the cross, the sacrifice for your sin; look to Him, rising from the dead, bringing you justification from sin; look to Him for grace and strength to keep under the affections of the body. If you so look to Him, your heart will soon begin to look for Him, forward to the grave, that quiet bedchamber where this vile body shall rest until Christ will wake it and will change it and fashion it like unto His glorious body. Amen.

XVIII.

Why it is not Strange that Christians Should Suffer.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. 1 Pet. 4: 12, 13.

It would seem as if ascribing our misfortunes to God as their author would only make greater the pain which we experience in consequence of them. When everything goes against us, there remains, at least, this comfort: "God is for me." If, then, God is also represented as being against us, what comfort is there left for us?

You, my beloved mourners, have within the last years undergone a series of trials of the most painful character. Death has darkened your door for the third time during this year, and has this time carried

off your oldest son in the bloom of young manhood. You have incurred serious material losses during a conflagration, and it is not unknown to us that through your connection with our congregation you have had to make financial sacrifices in your business. Unhappiness seems to have been caused you chiefly through your Christian endeavors. Just this son of yours, whom we shall bury to-day, had been the first member of your family, with whom we became acquainted, and he it was that persuaded you to join our Church in spite of all drawbacks which others pointed out to you as counseling against such a step. And now he, too, has been taken from you. You are being rebuked for ever having joined this church, and your troubles are made to appear as the natural result of your folly. Your own heart is faint and can find no solution of your strange perplexities.

I desire to show you, in a general way, what connection there exists between the trials of Christians and their faith, and shall ask you to apply all to your present bereavement, which, I am quite certain, God has intended also as a trial of your faith. At the end of the chapter from which our text has been taken, St. Peter sums up his entire teaching regarding the suffering of the righteous in this life, in these words: "Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." To this God, whom your flesh would image your enemy, I now wish to point you as to your compassionate and wise friend, and to show you:

WHY IT IS NOT STRANGE THAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD SUFFER.

1) Because their sufferings are necessary for their spiritual growth;
2) Because their sufferings conform them to Christ.

I.

When St. Peter says: "Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator," he means to say: God is a creator not of evil, but of good works. "What God does, ever well is done." God cannot do anything evil, neither can He do anything which would be harmful or unwise. What God does, He begins with prudence, and He continues it with wisdom, and finally He will bring it to a glad end. What God does, is not only right, but it is always done well and wisely. Therefore, says the apostle, when suffering befalls us, this should not disturb our minds, but we should commit it to God, knowing this, that God has long since considered well how many and what kind of sufferings are needful and beneficial to us, and has wisely ordained it so.

Of this Peter here treats more extensively. He says: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." If we Christians must endure afflictions, especially if we must experience any unpleasant things for the sake of Christ and His truth, we are not to regard this as a strange thing, or something unexpected. New beginners in the faith

frequently think that now, having become the children of God, they should be bedded on roses, and it appears to them a strange thing, when they find they must also be pricked by thorns. We are not to be such children in knowledge, but we are to know that whoso would have the rose, must also endure the thorns surrounding it. It is not something strange that those who are partakers with Christ, must also be partakers of the cross of Christ. If you gird your loins to be a follower of Jesus Christ, you must expect to fare similarly in the world as He did, and He had to enter into His glory through many sufferings.

What is God's object in burdening His Christians with the cross? Why, to try them, as Peter says: "The fiery trial which is to try you." God's object is to make the faith of His children sound and strong, and for this purpose it must be tried. And when the apostle says "fiery trial," he would evidently compare the trying of faith by afflictions and temptations with the trying of metal in the fire, as he also writes in the first chapter of this Epistle: "For a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise." Gold, if not altogether pure, is cast into the fire, and by smelting the baser metals are separated from it. Even so God will cast faith into the furnace of afflictions and temptations, that hereby its faults and weaknesses be made manifest and may be healed. If, for instance, a man's trust does, indeed, rest in God, but perhaps un-

known to himself he places undue confidence in his health, strength and ability to work, God will perhaps permit that man to be stretched on a bed of sickness, that this ailing of his faith be manifested unto him and he be taught to put his trust more freely in the Lord. Or if a Christian yet prizes the friendship of the world too high, God will perhaps suffer that man to be severely mocked and ill-treated for his piety; and God's object is to teach him henceforth no more to sit where the scoffers sit. So God imposes trials on faith to purify it from impure elements, faults and weaknesses, and thereby faith is at the same time also strengthened. A father who wants his boy to become a healthy and strong man, will not have that boy continually lounging around on a soft cushion, he will be diligent to try and to exercise his strength. A boy reared too delicately will remain delicate; to develop into a stout man, his muscles and energies must be exercised. God does not want His Christians to remain infants in the faith, He wants us to grow to the full stature of men, and therefore He causes our faith to be tried often, and frequently also to be exercised in fiery trials that it should become sturdy and strong. Such trials are, of course, not pleasant, while they last, but they are wholesome and good in the end.

II.

Therefore, we should do what the apostle further says: "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be re-

vealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." The cross of Christ we are to regard as an honor and not as a strange and shameful thing. If we must suffer with Christ, we should do it willingly and not unwillingly, with gladness and not with sadness. Of the Pharisees' fasting the Lord says in the sermon on the mount: "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast." To those hypocrites fasting was a hard piece of work to which, in their hearts, they were much averse. But His disciples the Lord commanded: "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face." The Lord desired His disciples to wear a bright face when fasting. The Lord is not served by making a wry face and wearing a sour visage; He delights in being worshiped with gladness. The Lord does not want such people as bear the cross with grumbling and are continually wishing to be rid of it; He wants such people as regard it a joy and an honor to be counted worthy to suffer for their Lord's sake. We should not only rejoice in the Lord, when everything moves on smoothly, but also in the evil day, when fiery trials are upon us, should our soul be joyous in the Lord. Surely something in which there is room for every one of us yet to grow. Two things the apostle holds up to us to persuade us thereto: The partnership with Christ, and the coming joy. By suffering for Christ's sake we are made partakers of Christ's sufferings. In the days of His flesh all manner of reproaches and evils were heaped on the head of Jesus

Christ by the world, and if for His name's sake we must, in a small measure, experience the same, this is not a reason for sadness, but rather a reason for gladness; it is not something dishonorable, but something very honorable if we are thus made partakers of Christ's sufferings. And if we are partakers of His sufferings, He will not leave us in misery, He will surely indemnify us in the day of His glory, and will make us to "be glad also with exceeding joy." Amen.

FOR YOUNG WOMEN.

(17—25 YEARS).

XIX.

The Bridegroom Came.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Matt. 25: 10.

If ever there is a time when a man can plainly see how sorely he needs the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which alone can give him true peace and rest and comfort, it is the time in which death approaches him or calls away one of those who are near and dear to him.

As long as a man enjoys good health, is not troubled with sickness or pain, he may think he has no need of the Gospel, but can get along without it; he may think that he needs no divine revelation, but that the light of his reason will suffice to show him the way to happiness; he may think that he needs no Saviour, no Redeemer, but that his own virtues, good works, and sincere efforts to do right will save him. But when evil days come, days of sorrow and sickness and distress; when they who were near and dear to him depart this life; when his heart becomes cheerless and joyless and comfortless; when he sees that all earthly things are vanity and that even "man at his best state is altogether vanity:" then, often his

eyes are opened, and he sees that without the Gospel of Jesus Christ this life is like a dark night without a star of hope, or like a vast desert without a single fountain of refreshing water.

What would, what could, support you, my mourning friends, in your bereavement but the stay and staff of the Gospel on which you lean? What an impenetrable darkness would envelop you, if the day-star from on high, Jesus Christ, did not shine in your hearts? How comfortless would you be, if you could not receive divine comfort—comfort from the precious word of God? Ay, how deplorable would be the state of us all, if we had not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the word of our God, for our support! We are now gathered around the coffin of one who was near and dear to us, who had the welfare of this congregation at heart, who took an active interest in all its affairs, who was a faithful teacher in its Sunday-School, but who now has passed away to be with us here no more. What David said of Jonathan, we may here apply: "We are distressed for thee, O daughter, O sister; very pleasant hast thou been unto us." Though in the prime of life, like a beautiful rose just beginning to unfold its leaves, yet she was cut down by that merciless reaper death. Why did she have to pass away so early in life? Why do so many roses wither, and so many thorns and thistles thrive? Why are so many blooming trees uprooted, and so many dead and barren ones left standing?

Had we not the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we could give no comforting answer to such and similar ques-

tions. The Gospel, however, the Word of God, tells us that, when a believing virgin is called hence, she is called by Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, into the bridal chamber of heaven; for thus we read in our text:

"THE BRIDEGROOM CAME, AND THEY THAT WERE READY WENT IN WITH HIM TO THE MARRIAGE, AND THE DOOR WAS SHUT."

Let me speak to you

1) Of the comfort;

2) Of the admonition contained in these words.

I.

It is very sad, my friends, to see a maiden, young and fair, lie cold and stiff and stark in death. Then our tears flow more freely than usual, for we think she has passed away too soon. Death then does not seem to us a messenger of peace, who relieves the weary and heavy laden of a burden, but as a destroyer, who kills the rising plant. And the more pious and godly the departed was, the greater seems to be the cause for sorrow and lamentation.

But lo, what a mistake! He who dies a believer never dies too soon, even though he dies in infancy. If a virgin belongs not to the foolish virgins, who follow the world and love not the heavenly Bridegroom, but to the wise virgins who by faith are espoused to Christ, she has fulfilled her mission on earth.

When such a virgin dies it is not a sad hour, but the happiest hour of her whole life. Her death is the messenger, who summons her to the marriage of her

heavenly Bridegroom; her grave is, as it were, the portal to the heavenly bridal chamber; and her grave-clothes are, so to speak, her heavenly wedding garment. She is then crowned with the wreath of immortality; her faith is changed into sight, her Bridegroom is ever at her side; and she is in the house of many mansions, where angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim are the guests of the Lamb and she then becomes His bride at the heavenly marriage-supper.

O you, therefore, who mourn the departure of your loved one, weep not! You know the departed belonged not to the foolish virgins but to the wise. Baptized in her infancy she put on her Saviour, for "as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Advancing in years she desired the sincere milk of the Word that she might grow thereby. Having been duly instructed in the Word of God, she professed a good profession before many witnesses and was confirmed in the faith. How she did rejoice to read and hear her Saviour! How she did long to tell her class of Him! The worst weather could not keep her from church and Sunday-School. Even when scarcely able she would continue to teach her class in the Sunday-School. You can see from all this, what love she had for her Saviour. And to this Saviour she has now gone, to be with him forever. Oh, why should you mourn, why should you lament? Verily, "the lines have fallen unto her in pleasant places." She was ready, ready to depart; ay, she longed "to be absent from the body and to be pres-

ent with the Lord." Remember, how repentingly she confessed her sins and in true faith relied upon the words of absolution. Remember, how eagerly she received the body and blood of her Saviour in Holy Communion, and how greatly her weary soul was refreshed thereby. And oh! remember those comforting words she uttered but the evening before her departure: "Perhaps Jesus will call me to-night." Ah! indeed, hers is a happy lot. She suffered here below, but she reigns above; she sighed and wept here on earth, but she rejoices and triumphs there in heaven. Hence weep not! Angels have carried her into Abraham's bosom and she is forever happy and blessed.

II.

But, my friends, the words of our text contain also an admonition for us all. You young people, who perhaps think of nothing so little as of death, who are making great plans for the future, are you ready to depart, ready as the wise virgins in our text were, ready as the dear departed was? The coffin before us reminds us of the words of the Psalmist: "Man's days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more." This coffin illustrates the truth of the words of the Preacher: "Childhood and youth are vanity. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." This coffin corroborates the words of the apostle: "Here we have no continuing city," and: "It is appointed unto men once to die." Ay,

Who knows how near my end may be?
Time speeds away and death comes on;
How swiftly, ah, how suddenly
May death be here and life be gone!

Do you believe this? Do you think of this? Oh, do, for "ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Therefore

"Let all your lamps be bright
And trim the golden flame!
Gird up your loins, as in His sight,
For awful is His name.

Watch! 'tis your Lord's command,
And while we speak He's near,
Mark the first signal of His hand
And ready all appear.

"Oh happy servant he
In such a posture found!
He shall his Lord with rapture see
And be with honor crowned!"

And we, the members of this congregation, the Sunday-School teachers, and the members of our Young People's Society, can all learn a great lesson from the departed, namely, to be faithful in our work, to do it gladly and cheerfully. You well know what an interest, a zeal, what a faithfulness, the departed manifested in all our church work; how she tried and tried hard, to do what was in her power to further the welfare of our congregation. Oh! let us follow her example and "work while it is day, before the night cometh

when no man can work." Above all, however, let us remain steadfast in the faith as she was. Though frequently tempted to doubt or even to deny plain Scripture truths, such as the fall from grace, infant baptism, or that Baptism is the "washing of regeneration" as Paul calls it, yet she clung to the Word, kept the faith, remained true to her church, did not become a backslider, and now has received the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, had laid up for her in heaven.

And you, children of our Sunday-School, and particularly, the scholars of her class, remember your dear teacher who has spoken unto you the words of life. It is just about a year ago this week that she began to practice hymns with you for Christmas and taught you "the old, old story of Jesus and his love," how He was born at Bethlehem, how the angel of the Lord appeared unto the shepherds saying: "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Saviour, which is Christ, the Lord;" how the multitude of the heavenly hosts appeared and sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." See, this year she will not celebrate Christmas with you here on earth, but she will celebrated a far happier Christmas in heaven. There will she see, ay, is even now seeing, her Saviour face to face, and singing his praises with all the angels and the dear little children that are gathered around His throne. But though your teacher is gone, still He of whom she spoke to you, Jesus, the

Saviour, is with you. Oh, trust Him, love Him, and obey Him, and then you, too, one day shall see Him face to face and meet her again who spoke to you of Him.

And finally you, mourning relatives, also to you do those silent lips before us speak. And that which they say to you is: "Love one another." See, your ranks are thinned, your number is decreased, your relationship is smaller, oh, therefore cling to one another so much more firmly and love one another so much more fervently. "Be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Let the death of your sister and daughter unite your hearts so much more closely, so that hand in hand you may journey to the heavenly home, where we all hope to meet her again "clothed in white robes and bearing palm branches in her hands." Yea, may God grant us all that when our last moment approaches we, too, may fall asleep in the true knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

XX.

The Lord's Handmaiden.

He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Luke 1: 48.

"He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." These, you remember, are the words of Mary, the mother of our Lord. They are filled with

the deepest humility and the most joyous exaltation, and are at once testimonial of her faith and her joy in God.

What an honor was hers! Well might God's messenger say to her: "Thou art highly favored, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women," for she had indeed found favor with God. Ah yes, her words have been fulfilled, for all generations did indeed call her blessed.

And still notice her humility. "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." Do you find anything there to warrant the idolatrous homage paid to her name by the poor, misled people of the Church of Rome? Anything which would warrant the assumption, that she was not flesh, born of the flesh, a sinner, like as we? Do you find anything here to hinder us from putting these her words upon the lips of any lowly handmaiden of Christ? Is there anything here to prevent, let us say, this bride of the Lamb from saying with Mary: "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden," and thus adopting Mary's testimonial of her lowliness and God's exaltation of it to be her own "magnificat?" Verily, no. Let us therefore listen to this song of praise as though it came from her lips, now mute in death, of

THIS HANDMAIDEN OF OUR LORD.

We shall notice

1) Her humility.

2) God's exaltation of it.

I.

Mary here applies a name to herself which in this age of ours is shunned as carrying a stigma with it. She calls herself a servant: It is a mark of the false education and false ideals of our time, that the idea of going out to service is so utterly repugnant to many of our young people. The position of a servant is considered menial and debasing. The average shop-girl imagines that she occupies a higher position in the social scale (whatever that may be) than her friend who chooses to be a servant in some Christian household. A false pride, a fear of restraint, a false conception of personal liberty is, no doubt, the root of this sentiment.

It is certainly not Scriptural, as every Lutheran knows or should know by studying the table of duties in his Catechism. And surely none of us ought to hesitate to wear a name borne by the queen of womankind. Suffice it therefore to say, Mary calls herself a handmaiden, a servant.

She speaks of her "low estate." She is speaking, not of her character, but of her condition. Some commentators give Gideon's words as a parallel: "Behold my family is poor in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house." This is the sense of her words: my family is poor in Judah and I am the least in my father's house a poor, lowly handmaiden of no repute and fame. Luther in this connection says, we may well believe that her parents were poor, plain people, and that she, in all probability, was early left an orphan.—

There is much in her life besides this statement of our text which might be adduced to justify such an inference.

Now, my friends, I have selected this text and showed you the virgin's lowly estate, not because I feel that the character or circumstances of the deceased need any apology or defense. Those who best knew her, will bear me out in saying, that both as a quiet, humble Christian and a faithful member of the family in which she dwelt, she needs no encomium from me. Her simple, unobtrusive piety, her faithful service, her realization of the truth, so little understood nowadays, that every servant serves not man, but Christ, is best attested by the tears of the many friends who mourn her early death.

But I do wish to draw your attention to a truth pointed out by her life and character and that is this: "God exalteth them of low degree."

II.

This is an ambitious age. We seem to have lost all appreciation of quiet, home virtue. We wish to do great things, to be artists, poets, philosophers. Quiet, every-day, home-made Christianity no longer suffices us. We must do great things, build a hospital, endow a university, organize a "movement." We must be seen and praised of men. We seem to have utterly forgotten the truth expressed in these words of our text: "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden," the truth that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble," that the lowly estate of the handmaiden, Mary, found more favor in His

sight than the ostentatious service of Caiaphas' daughter.

We put our mathematical, dollars-and-cents method of calculation into service at all times and places, and therefore imagine that God is to judge us according to the magnitude of our services, the extent of our gifts, just as if you could not put as much love into the giving of a cup of cold water as into the founding of an asylum. How foolish!

Listen to Luther on our text: "Now," says he, "here is depicted and shown to us what is the manner of our God; namely, that He looks down. He cannot look up over Himself, for there is none above Him; He cannot look beside Himself for He hath none beside Him to equal Him; therefore He only looks downward. And so the deeper you are and the lower you are, the clearer do God's eyes rest upon you."

Luther certainly does not mean that the deeper and lower you are in the mire of sin, the clearer you are seen of God. If that were the case, the path to God's favor would be unrighteousness and iniquity. He means the deeper and lower you are in your own estimation, the deeper your contrition and self-abasement because of your sins, the nearer you are to God's favor. For "God giveth grace to the humble." "He putteth down the mighty from their seats and exalteth them of low degree." He does this outwardly in the working of His providence, even as He regarded the low estate of Mary rather than the wealth and pride of some king's daughter, but particularly in His kingdom of grace. When it comes to a dispensation of

His spiritual honors and riches He chooses not the wise men after the flesh, not the mighty or the noble, but the foolish, weak, and despised things of this world. He fills the hungry, they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, with good things, and sends them who are rich in self, rich in their own conceits, away empty of Christ. In His kingdom of grace God always works with broken tools and confers His highest honors upon those who, in our opinion, least deserve them. Verily, God's ways are not man's ways.

May we not, knowing this to be true, confidently hope that our good and gracious Lord has also looked with lovingkindness upon the lowly estate of this His handmaiden; aye, may not He, who preferred the widow's mite to the Pharisee's treasures, also find a like praise for her faithful, loving service in His name? Ah, my friends, when we enter our eternal home, I fear we shall find many of Christ's little ones set in places above those whom men honored and adored as saints. We shall find many names, not written in our calendars, emblazoned with letters of gold in God's eternal roll of honor. Let us therefore pray God, here at the grave of one of His "little ones" to help us by her life and death understand these words, "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." Thus, being dead, she may yet speak.

Let us, thanking for all that He has done for her, be moved to like true humility, so that we also may ever remain of low estate in His kingdom. Then will our Lord also regard our low estate when His time comes and make His strength perfect in our weakness. Amen.

XXI.

Why Weepest Thou?

Why weepest thou? John 20: 15, 16.

The morning of the first Easter Day had scarcely dawned, when three women, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome hastened to the grave of Jesus, in order to anoint his beloved corpse. But who will describe their terror and amazement, when they saw the stone rolled away, the sepulchre standing wide open, and the place, where their dead Saviour was laid, empty? True, an angel declares to the affrighted women: "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified; he is risen!" But they went out quickly and fled from the sepulchre for they trembled and were amazed; neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid (Mark 16:6-8). Mary Magdalene, however, remained at the open door of the grave and wept. Oh, how unhappy she was! She above all others had experienced the saving love of her Saviour. Upon her He had revealed his glorious power for, as Mark relates, He had driven seven devils from her, had thus freed her from the power of the infernal fiends and saved body and soul from temporal and fearful eternal ruin. Never, never could she forget that act of love! Henceforth her whole life was a sacrifice in the service of her Saviour. And now He was dead, her Jesus, her one and all! And not only that, even His grave His foes had not spared but, as she thought, had come by night and carried off His body, and therewith taken the last thing which

remained to her of her Saviour. Alas! her heart seemed ready to break; the very sun, moon and stars seemed extinguished in heaven, and a thick, impenetrable veil of black despair to spread out before her tear-clouded eyes. How deep her sorrow was we see from the fact that when she stooped down and looked into the grave and saw two angels there, she did not cry out in terror nor fly away in fright, but to their question: "Woman, why weepest thou?" she sobbingly replied: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." Then, perhaps, she perceives how the angels suddenly bow down to the ground, and when she turns herself back, she beholds Jesus, but in her great anguish knows not that it is He. Her eyes are held and she thinks it is the gardener. Therefore she does not at once recognize His voice, when He says to her: "Woman, why weepest thou?" but asks: "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." Then Jesus calls her by name saying, "Mary!" and lo! now her eyes are opened, she recognizes her Saviour, she sees that He whom her soul loves, is no longer dead, but lives, has risen from the dead; and with unutterable joy she falls down at His feet and cries out: "Rabboni," which is to say, "Master, my Master!" Who will describe the height of her bliss! No human tongue is able. Her heart, swimming before in blood now swims in heavenly ecstasy. Before her enraptured eyes all the earth has turned into a very paradise of celestial joy. In a word, she who for three days had been struggling with death

now has a foretaste of life everlasting. You, like Mary, my dear friends, are weeping at the grave of a beloved one, of a daughter and sister whose affectionate love filled your heart, your house, your lives with gladdest sunshine. Oh, what happiness you have lost in her! How you will miss her tender looks, her helpful hands, her cheering words, her heart so full of truest, tenderest love for you and all your joys and sorrows. Your heart like Mary's is filled with bitter woe and dark despair, and there seems to be none to comfort you. And yet there is One who can and will also dry your tears, also heal your bleeding hearts and also change your agony into rapturous joy. Do you not know Him? It is your risen Saviour, Christ, who also asks you so full of compassion as He did Mary Magdalene at His grave:

"WHY WEEPEST THOU?"

Let me show you
1) The meaning of this your Saviour's question;
2) What answer you should give Him.

I.

It is true, my weeping friends, that your risen Saviour will not appear bodily, visibly, as before Mary also before you and ask you: Why weepest thou? And what would it avail you if He did? What did it avail Mary that she saw Christ in the body? That did not comfort her in her woe and sorrow, but only heightened her anguish; for, supposing Christ to be

the gardener, she cries out: "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, etc!" But when Christ spake to her: "Mary!" then she recognized His voice. With His word Christ changed Mary's sorrow into joy. So even to-day Christ with His saving power will not be known by any external, corporal appearance, but alone by His word. His word is the means by which Christ comforts the sorrowing hearts of his disciples, dries their tears and turns their grief into joy and happiness. You also have this Word of your Saviour, my weeping friends. In it he also comes to you and asks: Why weepest thou? And what does he mean by this question? Is it not: Thou father, thou mother, thou brother, thou sister, sobbing so bitterly here at the bier of your departed daughter and sister, thinking perhaps in your anguish that in my wrath, my anger, I have taken her from you,—Oh Mary! i. e. thou dear Christian heart, why, why weepest thou thus? Look at me, I, your Saviour, am no longer dead but alive, have risen from the dead! For whose sake? For your sake. I hung on the cross, bearing your sins, suffering your guilt and punishment and was laid in the grave for your sake. But look at me! Do you see any sign of your sin, guilt and condemnation still on me? No, all your sins and transgressions I have buried in the grave, hidden them there forever. I was delivered up for your offenses and was raised again for your justification. Why, then, do you weep as if God was still angry with you? In me all your sins are forgiven, God is reconciled to you and there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. There-

fore not in my wrath have I taken this your dear one from you but because I have loved her with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn her to Me!

Or does the thought, that your sweet daughter and sister has gone from you after so short an illness and must now see the corruption of the grave, fill your hearts with such bitter woe? Lo, again your risen Saviour asks you: Why weepest thou? Mary, i. e., thou dear Christian heart, look at me! I, your Jesus, am no longer dead, I live, victoriously have I abolished death and brought life and immortality to light. For whom? For you, for this your daughter and sister. My resurrection proves beyond all doubt that I am the resurrection and the life, and he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Oh sweet consolation! You know that this your loved one believed in Christ. Her life, her acts and words, her never failing love for Christ, His church, His word, revealed the faith within her. Her last hours, her last prayer: "I fall asleep in Jesus' wounds" (Hymn Book No. 375), did they not show you that Jesus was the lover of her soul? And now that the bridegroom has taken home his bride to the marriage feast in heaven, will you still weep and mourn over her as lost? Will you not believe those blessed words of your Saviour: They that believe in me shall never die? Verily, she is not dead but sleeps, sleeps in Jesus! Oh, will you not let her sleep undisturbed this sweet, calm sleep in Jesus' arms? Where, where could she find

a happier resting-place? Could you really wish her back again into this mournful life of toil and care, of sorrows and heartaches innumerable? Nevermore! She is happier, far happier with Jesus in His mansions above, where the great multitude which no man can number stand before the throne of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands, and the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne feeds them and leads them unto fountains of living water, and God himself wipes away all tears from their eyes.

Or, finally, my weeping friends, will you object: All true: but still we have her no longer with us, this our helpful Abigail, the staff and comfort of our declining years! True, but you have your Saviour still with you who says: "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. Lo! I am with you always even to the end of the world!" Has He not promised to sustain you with His strong right arm, to lead you in His paths of mercy and finally receive you into glory where you shall see Him face to face and with Him all your loved ones gone before and also your oldest daughter and sister? Oh, what a joy when you shall see the glorious promise fulfilled (John 16:22): "But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing; for in that day, ye shall see that I have ordered all things well with you, with her!" In the light of that joy, that blessed assurance, my dear friends, listen to your Saviour's question: Why weepest thou?

II.

What answer will you give? What answer did Mary give there at the sepulchre of Christ when she recognized her risen Saviour? It is but one cry, one word that escapes from her trembling lips, but in it she compresses her whole heart, her faith and love and happiness! She answers: "Rabboni," i. e., Master, my Master!

Behold, my weeping friends, the answer you should also give to the question of your risen Saviour. It is: "Rabboni, Master, our God and Saviour! Thou seest the anguish of our hearts, the grief over the death of this our dearest daughter and sister. Thou knowest how dearly, oh how dearly we long to keep her with us. But Thy thoughts are not our thoughts and Thy ways are not our ways. Oh Rabboni! Master, our Master! Thy will be done! Thou, oh Lord, has given, thou, oh Lord, hast taken away and therefore though with burning tears and breaking hearts yet with trusting resignation will we say: "Blessed be the name of the Lord! For we know, Rabboni, oh our Master, from Thy own faithful lips that we are thy redeemed children and Thou our Christ, our Saviour who has loved us even unto death. Thy ways, therefore, with us are always right, and perfect, love rules o'er them although far above our sight! Oh Rabboni, Master, our Master, thou Help of the helpless, abide with us in this bitter hour of bereavement, grant us Thy Holy Spirit, that he may quicken and strengthen our sinking faith, save us from the bitter pains of

despair and death, and when our tearful pilgrimage is done grant us a blessed end and graciously take us into Thy heaven and to happy reunion with her above."

Will you not answer in such resignation and faith, my weeping friends? Verily, then heavenly comfort will fill your weeping souls, the peace of God which passes all understanding will keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ, and when finally with Mary Magdalene your rapturous eyes behold His glory, united with her you will kneel down with her before the great, white throne and adoring his wondrous counsels of love cry out: "Amen; blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever." Amen.

XXII.

What God Hath Done for My Soul.

Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. Psalm 66: 16.

I have often heard people, into whose homes death had entered, taking a husband and father, utter such wishes as these: Oh, if he would only speak to me again! If I could hear but one word of farewell! Only one word and I would try to be content. I would try to say, "Thy will be done."

But now we hear his voice no more. His lips are sealed in death. Oh, how hard it is to bear!—Yes, such thoughts come to every heart when it is writhing in the first agony of pain at a cruel separation. For death, the king of terrors, the wages of sin, is cruel.

Now, I would not have you imagine that such thoughts and desires are positively wrong and sinful. Our Highpriest Christ Jesus, who was tempted like as we, yet without sin, has compassion with our infirmities, even with our infirmities in thought. For such these wishes are. They are a mistake, a result of our ignorance. Our departed are not altogether silent. Being dead they yet speak, even as do the saints of old, of whose faith and trials we have a rec-

ord in the Scriptures. Surely, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews shows us that.

So bear with me for a moment, while I try to enter upon this your heart's desire. Let us imagine that your request had been complied with. Let us imagine that your husband and father, who has now entered into the rest of the people of God, had been granted the power of physical speech. What would he say? Listen!

"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what God hath done for my soul." Surely, we dare not imagine that his words would be of the paltry affairs of this present time, of the things of the flesh. No, it would be,

"WHAT GOD HATH DONE FOR MY SOUL."

I.

And what did He do? He redeemed me from sin. My friends, if I were to stand here before you to-day striving to comfort you as the world does, namely by eulogizing the deceased, recounting a catalogue of his virtues, real or imaginary, telling you things which our departed brother never believed of himself, I would not only be unworthy of my name as a Christian minister, but richly deserve your contempt. For our brother, like all men, was a sinner. And he knew it. The words of our service, "We poor sinners confess unto thee, that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against thee, by thought, word and deed," were to him no mere form of words, no mere figure of speech, but a bitter reality. Like Christian in Bunyan's allegory, he carried a heavy

load upon his shoulders, and what is more, he felt its weight. Oh, that every son of Adam were aware of this sad truth! Oh that every one who on Sunday repeats this confession with us felt it to be a personal matter!

As our departed brother's pastor, I may assure you that it was this to him. And so was redemption. He redeemed me from sin. Knowing and acknowledging himself to be "a lost and condemned creature," he could say of our Lord: "Who redeemed me," "who purchased me," "who won me." Being dead, he yet speaketh. Listen. Come hither and harken, all ye that fear God: He redeemed me from sin.

II.

Again, he brought me to a knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus Christ. "I believe," says Luther in his explanation of the Third Article, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him." Ah, yes; man cannot save himself. He cannot find Christ of himself. "Without me, ye can do nothing," saith the Lord. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

This being true, what would our brother, could he speak, now say to us? Would it not be this: He brought me to a knowledge of Christ. He brought me to a saving faith in God's pardon as it is in Christ Jesus. "He called me by the gospel. He enlightened my understanding with His gifts, He sanctified

my will; He kept me unto the end. To Him be the glory. Oh, come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what God hath done for my soul." He redeemed me from sin. He by His word and grace brought me to a knowledge of my Saviour. He showed me pardon in Him. He gave me power to grasp it: aye, to hold it.

III.

To hold it. There are times of trial and tribulalation in the life of every Christian; times when neither moon nor stars appear to direct his faltering footsteps as he journeys toward the better land; times when he cries out with Jacob, "All these things are against me." Perhaps this present bereavement appears to you in that light. You, no doubt, feel your loss as keenly as Jacob did.

You, who were nearest and dearest to the deceased know best how far this truth applies to him. He, no doubt, had his share of suffering, of trials, of temptations.

You know best, and you will therefore be best able to say, how God kept him, guided and strengthened his faltering footsteps on the road toward Zion. So, you will be best able to understand, when I tell you that if your loved one could speak, it would be with words, such as these: "Hearken, 'what the Lord hath done for my soul.' He guided and directed my footsteps in the difficulties and perplexities of life. He supported me and showed forth His strength in my weakness. He kept me from all harm and danger,

He preserved my soul in the midst of temptations; He made my pains, my infirmities a showing forth of His glory; and now

IV.

He has taken me into His eternal rest, into that blessed place where our Lord has gone to prepare His many mansions for His people. Oh, if I could tell you of those unspeakable things which I now hear and see, things which 'eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard, neither have ever entered into the heart of man,' things and words 'which it is not lawful for a man to utter.' Oh, if I could tell you of them. But what good would it do? Your eyes are too dim, your hearts too narrow to perceive and grasp and comprehend what God has done for my soul."

My friends, this is a precious text and a proper understanding of its truths will make it very dear to you. Let it be an answer to the cryings of your heart. Bind it up with your recollections of your husband and father. Then it will indeed be a real comfort and inspiration to you and to us. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what God hath done for my soul." May God help you and me to say here in time, He redeemed me from sin, and brought me to Christ so that we may say then in eternity: He kept me in every trial and led me through all evil into rest with the people of God. Amen.

XXIII.

A Little While.

A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. John 16:16.

This text was suggested by the peculiar circumstances of this family, apparently torn apart by death after having been united for such a little while. Setting out with the brightest of prospects a few months ago, amid the congratulations of loving friends, their happiness lasted but a moment. So you will, no doubt, admit that these words are appropriate to this occasion, when we are met to sorrow with them who sorrow even as we rejoiced with them in their rejoicing.

"A little while." These are Christ's words, you remember, spoken in those last hours of sad, sweet communion, when he was striving to prepare His disciples for His nearing departure, "A little while, and ye shall see me." The mode of expression is purposely enigmatical, the "ye shall not see me" and the "ye shall see me" not being co-ordinate, for the first refers merely to physical, the other also to spiritual sight. No wonder they did not understand. Nor did they, when He explained and told them that they were to weep and lament, but their sorrow was to be turned into a joy which no man might take from them.

There is much in these words of our Lord, much of warning, of admonition and comfort for this poor life of ours, and their import is particularly brought

home to us to-day, when we are met at the bier of one who was with us for such a little while. Let us, therefore, ask:

WHAT DO THESE WORDS "A LITTLE WHILE" SAY TO US?

I.

First, I see in them a call to repentance. Compared with eternity, the Gospel-day is but a little while. How much more the time of grace vouchsafed to an individual soul. A life time! How long a period of time that seemed to us in our youth. Then all at once came the consciousness that our life was half gone. Like a flash came the thought I have but a little while to live. It startled us. Does not the sudden death of our friend say the same? Thank God, "the little while" of his life was long enough for him to find Christ and a plenteous redemption in His wounds. The time of grace granted him was not at all too short as it is for so many. But how about you? Have you found peace for your soul? Have you begun to live after the Spirit? Can you say: "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day?—Remember, your time of grace will not last forever. Therefore, "to-day if you hear His voice harden not your hearts," but repent while it is yet time.

II.

"A little while." We are pilgrims and strangers here below, says St. Peter in his First Epistle. This

world is not our home, for we are fellow citizens with the saints of the city of God. So this world is not even our "continuing city" any more than was the stony desert of Arabia an abiding place for Israel. No, our life is but a journey, a pilgrimage, a "going home." At any moment we may be at our journey's end. At any moment we may be called to cast the dusty sandals of this present time from off our feet and enter into the holy courts of the New Jerusalem. At any moment our pilgrimage may end. And even if it does continue for a few years, it is nevertheless but "a little while."

Therefore, watch. The end of the pilgrimage is near. The home of our deliverance draws near. Lift up your heads. We shall soon be there, at home, watch. Be ye ready. It is just a little while longer.

III.

"A little while." That means work. Even if this world is not our certain dwelling place, we are put here, not for ourselves alone, but for others. We have a purpose to fulfill, a duty to perform, a work to do. There is a place in God's economy which I, and I alone can fill. I have but a little while to do it in. Life is short. It is a day; a breath, and it is gone. Then comes the night when no man can work. So these words of our text are an inspiration to faithful service. Work, for the night is coming, coming in but a little while. Therefore, O Christian, work! Surely, there is enough to do. Why stand idle in the

market place? Why wait until the eleventh hour? The day is short as it is.

IV.

But, my friends, there is not only warning and admonition in these words. No, like honeycomb, they drip with comfort. "A little while" and this time of trial and tribulation will be past. I need hardly point out to you the fact, that this our life is a time of trial, where we, surrounded by the fires of temptation, are being purified from our infirmities and made pure gold for the hands of our Lord.—Your own experience, the services of to-day, the sorrow which has entered this happy home, are surely a sufficient proof of that. Oh, I know it seems long and hard to bear. I know it seems an endless night of tears. Yet, if you will stop to compare it with God's eternity, where there is no time, no beginning, no end; only forever and ever, where a thousand years are as one day and one day as a thousand years, the little while of this present life and its trials sinks into utter insignificance. Ah, yes, "ye now therefore have sorrow, ye weep and lament, but in a little while ye shall rejoice, for I will see you again and your joy no man shall, or can, take from you."

V.

"I will see you again." That means the time of separation is to be short. Our Lord made good His promise at His resurrection and thereby gave us a pledge, a seal, an assurance that we are to see our

dear ones, who sleep in the Lord, again. And that in a little while. The time of separation is not to last forever. If that were so, then we would have every reason to sorrow and bemoan the death of our loved ones as an irreparable loss. Who could then blame us, if we sorrowed as they who have no hope?

We are Christians—followers of Him, who by His death and resurrection, brought life and immortality to light. We can say: O death, where is thy sting? We can look forward to a reunion (a meeting again). Our dear ones are not gone—they are only gone before. We are to meet again, there, beyond the river. They are waiting for us, longing for us, looking for us.

And it will only be a little while, just a little while. Thank God for this comfort. May He fill our hearts with that hope, and make it a motive to daily repentance, unceasing watchfulness and diligent labor in his vineyard. Amen.

XXIV.

At Rest.

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.—Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. Heb. 4: 9, 11.

How often we see these words "At Rest" on a funeral casket, or as part of some floral offering sent as a token of sympathy to mourning friends in a bereavement such as this.

"At Rest!" May I ask what these words mean for you? Do they merely say that the deceased has at last found deliverance from pain in the cold embrace

of death? Do they mean that his troubles and trials, his cares and worries, are now a thing of the past, since he is about to find rest in the grave? Do they mean that our departed brother is now happily removed from the strife and conflict of this world, where life is only a struggle for existence; that he is at rest in the sleep of an unbroken death? Ah, my friends, if these words say only that and nothing more to you and me, then it were better they were never read, for the sentiment they express would not be a Christian one, even as the consolation they offer is merely negative in character.

Thank God, they mean more and say more. What Christian can see them without being reminded of Hebrews four: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." V. 9. "Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest." V. 11. Let me speak to you of the Rest of the People of God, and to show

1) That there is such a rest;

2) How we may enter into that rest.

I.

"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." That is a fact stated. The great author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the first nine verses of this chapter is leading on to the inference that the rest of God, spoken of in the 95th Psalm, is a thing yet in store for God's people. In v. 2 he departs from the primary sense of the words "my rest" as used in the Psalm and lays stress on the word "his," making it God's rest, i. e., the rest into which God has entered.

"God" he says "did rest on the seventh day from all His works" (v. 4), a statement which refers not only to that rest of one day after the completion of creation, but to that enduring rest which began then and still continues; a rest not necessitated by fatigue nor conditioned by idleness, but that very continuance in governing and upholding of which the Creation was the beginning.

This rest is not a thing future to God; He has already entered therein. Still we have in verse 5, after God had thus entered into His rest, the oath: "They shall not enter into my rest." Consequently, it remains that some must still enter in (v. 6). For it is plain from God's repeating this warning to David so many centuries after he had first given it to Israel, that they, to whom it was first promised, did not enter into this rest because of their unbelief and disobedience (v. 7). If Joshua had led them into this rest, surely, God could not afterward have spoken of another day of rest (v. 8). It therefore follows that there remaineth a rest for the people of God (v. 9). Their rest is yet future; it remains open; it is not yet occupied; not yet exhausted. God's rest is yet in store for God's people; reserved for that time when they shall rest from their labors as God did from His (v. 10).

This is the argument, and with an irresistible force it drives home the truth, that there is yet a rest in store for all of God's people, a heavenly Canaan into which we are to enter by faith in God's promise, even as Israel of old entered the promised land by trusting and relying upon God's word.

What is this rest? To Israel it was first of all the land which God had promised to their fathers (Deut. 31:7; Joshua 1:13), that Canaan into which Joshua led a believing people, whom God had prepared in the wilderness. But the words have a higher meaning, for Joshua did not give them perfect rest. No doubt, Canaan, the land of milk and honey, seemed a perfect rest to the weary, footsore band, which followed the ark of the covenant borne on the shoulders of the bare-footed priests down the banks of the flooded Jordan and came up on the other side to stand in the midst of the rustling wheatfields, ripe for harvest, which surrounded Jericho, the City of Palms. After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, this their entering into the land of promise, where every one of them was to sit down in contentment under his own vine and figtree, must indeed have seemed an entering into a perfect rest. We can well imagine how the springs and brooks, the fields of corn, the waving trees must have filled their hearts with a sense of calm, sweet enjoyment. Israel was at rest. Every flower, every bud, every new fruit, must have said to them: "Rest, Israel, rest. This is the promised land. This is Canaan. This is rest."

But was it? How soon they were undeceived. Sin was there; sickness was there; death was there. Instead of peace and quietness, we read of war and bloodshed. Instead of faith and love, we see unbelief and disobedience. Instead of rest, we see only toil, labor, care and tribulation. "Joshua had not given them perfect rest" (v. 8).

Still the promise stands. God speaks of His rest again and again. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." (v. 9). A perfect rest. God's rest. A rest into which another and a greater Joshua is to lead the justified and sanctified people of God. He, our Joshua, has gone before through the dark waters of death, leading the way for God's people to follow into that heavenly Canaan, that holy ground, where there "shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21:4), for there "shall God wipe away all tears from their eyes."

God's rest. There shall we cease forever from our labors as God did from His; aye, we shall by the lovingkindness of our Lord "be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of His house, and shall be made to drink of the river of His pleasure" (Ps. 36:8).

There will we have rest, perfect rest. Not a mere negative deliverance from evil, but a positive enjoyment of the joy, rest and glory of the kingdom of God.

II.

"Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest." Beloved, have you ever experienced the feeling of utter weariness, which now and then comes over us poor wanderers who are still struggling along in this world's wilderness of sin and care and work and trouble? You know what I mean. The feeling of despairing helplessness, which makes one long to simply give up and lie down to escape that "many a conflict,

many a doubt, fightings and fears within, without," which here so sorely beset us.

These times come to the best of us. Elijah had that experience when he sat there under the juniper tree moaning: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life." Paul tasted it and said: "I long to depart." And I fear that you, who now are so filled with sorrow at your great loss, are drinking that same bitter cup. Your mortal dress, given you for this journey, though it last to the end, seems heavy, irksome, painful. O that we might cast it off and rest, only rest.

Are these your thoughts? Oh, do not despair. Remember, there remaineth a rest for the people of God. Your husband, our brother, has entered into that rest. And so shall we. It is promised us; sealed to us with an oath. "Therefore, let us labor to enter into that rest."

Remember, not all entered into Canaan. Nor shall all enter into the rest above. Many, oh, so many, defeat God's purpose and designs by their unbelief and disobedience. And so may we.

Therefore, let us labor. Do you ask how? Certainly, not by being content with this world and seeking rest here, like that rich fool spoken of in the gospel narrative. Much less by doubting God's wisdom, mistrusting His promises, and murmuring against His gracious leading as Israel did.

Not so, brethren, but by faith. "The rest of Christians is attained by faith," reads the heading of our chapter. We are told again and again that Israel

entered not in, because of their unbelief. Let us therefore believe His gospel promises concerning this rest of God and His people, and walk as it becometh His obedient children, with eyes set on high, striving to follow the footsteps of our Joshua leading toward the promised land. For, "there remaineth a rest to the people of God."—"Let us labor, therefore, to enter into that rest." Amen.

FOR YOUNG MARRIED WOMEN.

XXV.

Whither Thou Goest, I Will Go.

Whither thou goest, I will go. Ruth 1: 16, 17.

You weep, my friends, and you have cause to weep. Verily, if your grief knew no bounds, your tears and lamentations no end, who would have the heart to chide you? But a short, short year ago, she who sleeps before us here in the narrow bed of death was a happy bride who stood at this altar in all the grace and beauty of lovely maidenhood. Then she was decked in spotless bridal garments, with the greening myrtle in her hair and love and happiness beaming in her eyes. To-day she has come back to us at this altar, but others have carried her in, while not to the bridal march; no, the solemn funeral march announced her entrance. She is dressed again in her bridal garments, but they are the garments of death, the bridal wreath again crowns her white forehead, but oh, it is the bridal wreath of death. Her eyes are closed in death's long slumber, her lips are sealed, her heart has ceased to beat, and we are here to pay the last farewell to her mortal remains, and then consign them to the dark bridal chamber of the grave.

Oh, my weeping friends, what word of comfort, of hope, of peace can I, who feel so deeply with you your great loss, give you in this sad and bitter hour?

Lo, when I turned me to the Father of all mercies and God of all comfort, beseeching Him for grace, for mercy to cheer your sad hearts and mine, the text came to my mind, which by her own selection was her bridal text, those ever memorable words of Ruth: "Whither thou goest, I will go." That text, my friends, shall also be her funeral text, that shall be our farewell song at the bier of her whom we all loved so much.

May God in His mercy bless those sacred words and through them let you find a few crumbs of comfort, a few drops of heavenly consolation in this sad hour of bereavement. Hear then:

OUR TEARFUL YET HOPEFUL FAREWELL FROM OUR DECEASED SISTER.

We say:

1) Whither thou goest, etc.
2) Thy people shall be, etc.

I.

"Whither thou goest, I will go; and whither thou lodgest, I will lodge." Whither has she gone? Where does she lodge? True, in body she now goes to lodge in the grave, but not after her immortal soul. Her soul has entered into paradise, as Christ promised the dying thief, and in him to all penitent humble sinners dying in His faith, "Verily, I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise! But what kind of a place is paradise? If I could tell you, my friends, then I know your tears would be dried, your sobbings cease forever; then would you not weep

over your departed wife and sister, but count her happy, for it would be impossible for you to shed a tear over her, whose lines are fallen in such pleasant places, yea, who now hath such a goodly heritage. But alas! eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. Yet through our blinding tears we can catch a glimpse—and oh! what a comforting glimpse—of that consummate happiness, which is now hers in the company of all the blessed saints in heaven, if we will only look with eyes of faith into the Word of our God. As the stars above us reveal the splendor of the visible heavens, so the glories of that invisible heaven, of paradise, the blessed abode of the saints, glow, with entrancing light, in such divine passages as: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them." Rev. 14:3. "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Rom. 8:18. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away." Rev. 21:4. And best of all, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2. Aye, "now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I

am known." 1 Cor. 13:12. Oh, what bliss! "O Jerusalem, how glorious dost thou shine, thou city fair!"

There is joy beyond our telling,
Where so many saints have gone,
Thousands, thousands there are dwelling,
Worshiping before the throne.

Thither your wife and sister has gone, my weeping friends; there she now lodges free, forever free from all sin, care, and sorrow, in the arms of her heavenly bridegroom, her Saviour Jesus Christ. Lo! as Eliezer, Abraham's servant, entreated Laban and Bethuel: "Hinder me not, seeing the Lord has prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master," so does she entreat you even in death: "O my beloved, hinder me not with your tears and sighs and mourning, but let me go, oh, let me go, for the Lord has prospered my way, let me go, to be with my Master, with him whom my soul loveth, with Jesus in His blessed mansions above,

For, I see here what was told me,
See that wondrous glory shine;
Feel the spotless robes enfold me,
Know a golden crown is mine,
Thus before the throne so glorious
Now I stand, a soul victorious,
Gazing on that joy for aye
That shall never pass away.

Oh, tell me, my friends, will you not listen to her entreaties; will you not grant her dying request; will

you not let her go from this sad, wicked, tearful world, to live with Christ in His paradise above? Or will you complainingly ask: "But why must she die so young? Especially, weeping husband, does your heart so full of bitterness and woe, persistently ask: "Why could she not live? Why could not I, like others, live happily at the side of this my dear wife, with her raise my children in all love and honor, and finish my days, like so many others, as father, as husband, in peace and happiness?" Let me put a question in return: Do you really love her? All your tears, your grief show you do! Well, then, true love desires for the object of its affection all that is best for its welfare, its happiness. True love can only be happy when it knows its beloved is happy and contented. But, my friends, bitter as the parting may be, tell me what greater happiness could your deceased sister and wife have attained than there is in paradise? What greater, sweeter contentment could have become hers than she now enjoys in her blessed home above?

Oh verily, if in your tearful grief you will only stop to consider for a moment, what she escaped by her death, nothing else but sorrow and labor and pain and sin of this world, and what instead she gained, the joy, the peace, the incorruptible happiness of the world to come, then, my friends, I say that in your hearts must arise the firm wish, aye, resolution to pursue the same way she has gone to the heavenly Canaan above. You will say as Ruth to Naomi: "Whither thou goest, I will go;" i. e., no matter how much my weak flesh

may shrink back at the rough and thorny road that leads to heaven, no matter how much sin, world, Satan may tempt us to leave the narrow path of faith, we will not listen to their seductive voices. No! thou dearest, sweetest wife and sister, we promise here at your bier, in this sad hour of our last farewell: "Whither thou goest, I will go, and where thou lodgest, I will lodge." Thou hast gone to heaven, hast attained to the crown of everlasting life. With the gracious help of our God and Saviour we will strive after the same crown and live with thee in paradise.

II.

But, my friends, in order to reach that blessed paradise, where we can see her and all our loved ones again, and where death can no more part us, we must include in our farewell also those other words of Ruth to Naomi: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me." In these words Ruth, who by birth was a heathen, a Moabite, declares that from henceforth she would join the true people of God, the Israelites, and with them serve and worship the only true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You know how faithfully she carried out her resolution, how God blessed her for it, comforted her in her sad widowhood and finally made her one of the foremothers of Christ.

Our Ruth, our departed sister, belonged to the people of God, to the holy Christian church. From her

youth she served and worshiped the Triune God in true and humble faith. She was, as far as man can judge, a true Israelite that fought the good fight of faith while in this body; now the Lord has blessed her, hath given her the victory, the crown of everlasting life, oh let us follow her example! Like her let us remain true to God's people, to His holy Christian church. Like her let us faithfully, diligently hear and learn His gracious Word, use His blessed Sacrament, profess the name of our Saviour before all the world, prove ourselves true soldiers of the cross, shunning all the sins and vain pleasures of this deceitful world, and follow after godliness, which hath the promise of this life and the life that is to come. Oh then happy will we be, blest indeed above all measure by our true and faithful God. In His own sweet Word He will come and cheer us as a mother comforteth her weeping child, as often as the sense of our great loss would overpower us. His own good Spirit will then fill our hearts with living comfort and hope and assure us that nothing neither death nor life, etc., can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8). Then when comes the hour of our departure from this valley of tears, we shall be buried, where she now lies buried—and where is that? In the strong and loving hands of our Redeemer, where we shall never perish, from which no power in earth or hell can pluck us. And when the great reunion before His throne comes, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption and this mortal body put on immortality, then will death be swallowed

up in victory, then united with her and all the blest we shall sing through all eternity the triumphant song: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks, thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.

XXVI.

Address.

I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another. Job 19: 25, 26, 27.

Wherever in this valley of tears the King of Terror, Death, breaks into the habitation of man and claims his victim brimming eyes and sobbing lips and breaking hearts give evidence of his awful presence. But our sorrow at His mournful presence grows deeper and our grief turns a two-edged sword, when He takes from us, as in this instance, a loving sister, with whom our happy childhood days were spent; the tender wife who was to be our helpmate, the sharer of our joys and sorrows on the storm beaten path of life; yes, the fond young mother who so dearly would have liked to live for the sake of her heart's dearest treasure, her sweet babe.

Verily, it is in such instances we fully realize what depths of woe, what bitterness of spirit lies in that little word: death. And though, my friends, you have long foreseen the fatal end of your loved one's sick-

ness, still, now that the blow has fallen, now that she is gone from you, oh, what loving ties death has thus broken, what cherished hopes destroyed forever!

And yet, my friends, you should not weep as those that have no hope. There is a balm also for your wounds, comfort, grief-stilling comfort, also for your bleeding hearts in the word of our God. In this hour of bereavement while you are saying the last tearful farewell to your departed loved one, let me show you what divine consolation lies in the words of Job, chapter 19:25-27.

I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another.

Job was a sorely afflicted man. Death had robbed him in one day of seven sons and three daughters; border ruffians had carried off all his possessions, a terrible malady had made his body one great reeking sore, all his limbs were racked with excruciating pain; day and night he found neither rest nor sleep. Still deeper grew his misery when in the mouth of his nearest kin and dearest friends he had to hear words not of comfort and solace, but of upbraiding and condemnation. Even the wife of his bosom turned from him in disgust saying: "Curse God and die!" and still more, in his soul he felt the fiery darts of God's wrath and the onslaughts of the very fiends of hell. Therefore he cries out (v. 21): "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of

God hath touched me." But in spite of all these terrible afflictions, though forsaken not only by man, but even, as it seems, by his God whom he had served so long and faithfully, Job does not despair of that friend who sticketh closer than a brother. And who is that? That is his Redeemer. In the darkest night of his woe and misery he cheers his sorrowing heart with the blessed truth that his Redeemer has not forsaken him; that his Redeemer still lives, and though He afflicts his believing child now, yet in His own good time He will appear on earth, resurrect it from the grave, and lead it to everlasting peace, happiness and glory. From the lips of the patriarchs Job had heard of the wonderful promise concerning Christ, the Redeemer of sin-fallen man. The blessed Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, i. e., destroy the power of Satan and "deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." This word of God on the lips of the patriarchs Job accepts as divine truth, puts his faith and trust in it, applies the promise of the Redeemer unto himself, for he says: "My Redeemer," v. 27. Thus faith in Christ, His Redeemer, gives the great sufferer hope, strength, courage to bear his affliction; and oh, how he longs for that day when forever free from all misery, agony and corruption, he can behold the blessed face of God, his Redeemer! "My reins," he cries out, as the marginal note reads, "My reins, within me are consumed with earnest desire for that day." And he asserts it with all possible force that his longing shall be gloriously fulfilled, for he declares: "I know, I am convinced of

it, as a fact more sure than heaven and earth, that my Redeemer lives, and I shall see him," etc.

Our deceased sister was a sufferer, like Job, a great sufferer in body and soul, yet with this difference that she had a loving sister and faithful husband to watch and care for her, and to nurse her most tenderly throughout her long illness. But what is more, she was also like Job in her death-conquering faith. Oh, you my sorrowing friends, who have sat with me at her bedside know what undying faith lived within her, how as a poor, humble sinner she daily, hourly fled into the arms of her Jesus and there found forgiveness for all her sins, assurance of grace with God and rest for her weary soul.

You know how the word of Christ, the blessed gospel of Him that came into the world to save lost sinners, cheered and comforted her, bore her up as on angels' wings, on which she soared far above all pain of body, doubt and fear of soul, and found peace with God and all the world by faith in her Redeemer Jesus Christ. How? Is there the least doubt in your mind concerning the saving power of Christ's gospel? Did it not prove itself before your very eyes in the case of your departed sister and beloved wife, a power unto salvation, making her cry out: "Death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." When, in her last moments, she cried out: Jesus! My Jesus! Ready to go whenever Jesus calls me; did she not in effect say what Job here declares: "I know that my Redeemer lives!"

Why am I telling you this, my friends? For your comfort, for the strengthening of your faith in this sad hour. If the word of your God tells you, if the example and experience of your wife and sister proves to you: it is true what Christ says: "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me," etc., then why should you weep, as if you had lost her forever, as if you should never see her again? That is not true. Your separation is only temporary, only for a little while. There is, as we confess in our holy Christian creed, as Job here declares, as Christ, God's very Son, assures us, as your departed sister believed with all the saints in heaven and on earth, there is a resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Verily, our Saviour will reveal also to us the truth of his blessed promise which he left his sorrowing disciples: "I will see you again and your hearts shall rejoice and your joy shall no man take from you."

Oh, that blessed day when our Saviour appears in the clouds of heaven with all His holy angels and resurrects our sleeping bodies, fashioning them in the likeness of his glorified body and uniting His faithful children before His throne, causing them to meet again, who here fell asleep in Jesus and to part no more! Oh the joy, the bliss of that hour! (Then Rev. 21:4 and 5.) Then our hearts shall rejoice and our joy shall no man take from us.

But let that blessed truth also, powerfully exhort all present here to live daily, hourly, a life of true faith in Christ, in order that when He does come, be it in sudden death or final judgment, we may be found

worthy to stand before Him and be received into glory and bliss. To that end let us faithfully, diligently, attentively, hear and learn His gospel, for it is alone by His blessed word that he can and will prove Himself the Author and Finisher of saving faith, also in our weak hearts; save us from the guilt and power of sin, the snares of this wicked world, the wiles of the devil, and give us strength to follow Him on the steep and tearful road of the cross, of affliction and death, to the mansions of everlasting life above.

God grant you, my sorrowing friends and us all, such saving, world-conquering faith as there to Job and here to our departed sister, aye, grant it and preserve it, in us all for Christ Our Redeemer's sake. Amen.

XXVII.

The Christian's Happiness in Life and Death.

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Phil. 1: 21.

Christians, in their living and dying, are like other men. They eat and drink and clothe themselves like others. They have their joys and their sorrows as others have. They are found working in all the various callings and stations of life; they are rich and poor, learned and unlearned, experienced and inexperienced, have their merits and defects, their faults and failings and infirmities, and are influenced by their surroundings, just like others, who are not Christians.

So also in dying Christians are, to all appearance, like other men. They die young and they die old.

They die sudden deaths and they die lingering deaths. They die at home and they die abroad. They die in a conscious state and they die in an unconscious state. In all outward circumstances of living and dying there is no difference between Christians and others, who are not Christians.

So Christ also says: "The kingdom of God cometh not by observation; neither shall men say, lo here! or lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21). And St. Paul: "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. 14:17.) The same is implied in the Apostle's words, which we have chosen for our text on this occasion: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." This peculiar happiness of the Christian in life and death is not to be seen in any of the outward circumstances of his living and dying. The Apostle says: "Our life is hidden with Christ in God;" and: "Living, we live unto the Lord, and dying, we die unto the Lord; so, whether we live, or die, we are the Lord's." Here at the closing of a Christian life on earth, here at the bier of a young Christian wife and mother, mourned by a large number of Christian relatives and friends, and, perhaps, by some, who are not Christians, it will be appropriate for me to set forth to you

THE CHRISTIAN'S HAPPINESS IN LIFE AND DEATH.

1) His Happiness in Life;
2) His Happiness in Death.

I.

What is the Christian's happiness in life? It is Christ. The Apostle says, not as man, nor as apostle, but as Christian: "To me to live is Christ." That is, Christ is my life. What happiness: Christ is my life! Christ is the Son of God, and He is my life; then, so am I the child of God. Christ is holy and righteous in perfect obedience to the Father's will, and He is my life; then, so am I holy and righteous before God in Him. Christ is the true God and eternal life, and He is my life; then, so am I an heir of life eternal. What happiness!

The Christian knows as well as any one else that he is a sinner; but he believes in Christ, who knew no sin, and whom God made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; and He is the Christian's life. Not his own weak and sinful being and thinking and feeling and moving and doing and acting and willing, but Christ, is the Christian's life. The Christian knows as well as any one else, and better too, that in himself, that is in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing, that he is a wild and barren tree, only fit to be cut down and cast into the fire; but in Holy Baptism he was by faith grafted into Christ, and Christ is life. Christ himself says: "I am the way, the truth and the life;" I am the resurrection and the life; whosoever believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live." And St. Paul says of all Christians: "Even when we were dead in sins, God hath made us alive together with Christ (by grace are ye saved);

and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ." How and why? Because Christ is the life of Christians. This is their faith and their happiness in life. What happiness! It shines in the inner life of the Christian with the joyous assurance of faith, like the noonday sun with the triumphant light of day.

And here arises another sense in which Christ is the Christian's happiness in life. He is the Christian's life, that is, his aim and object in life. It is the Christian's joy to live unto Christ, to live for Christ, to confess Christ, that Christ's name and word and will and kingdom may be magnified by Him, and through Him also by others. If you examine the connection of the text you will see that this also belongs to what the Apostle said in these terse words: "For to me to live is Christ." He also meant this, that Christ was the whole aim of his life. What happiness in life, to have such an aim! For we thus know that our labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. Such a life is not lost; it bears fruit unto eternal life. The unbelieving worldling's happiness in life is money and riches. This is happiness as brittle as glass. "Nor doth a man's life consist in the things that he possesseth." The unbelieving worldling's happiness is the enjoyment of fleshly lusts. This is not happiness, it is corruption. "For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." The unbelieving worldling's happiness in life is "the pride of life." This is happiness full of danger. "Pride goeth before destruction," and the

loftier the pride, the deeper the fall. Not such is the Christian's happiness in life. His is happiness indeed.

We may trust that such was our departed sister's happiness in life. It comes through the Word of God and is nourished and strengthened by the Word of God. And she loved the Word of God. She loved the habitation of God's house and the place where His honor dwelleth. And you, bereaved and mourning friends, let this happiness also shine on and in your lives, and under the pressure of your present bereavement it will flow with comfort and consolation, as wine flows from under the press; and the heavier the pressure, the stronger the flow. This happiness of the Christion can stand any pressure in life, and is happiness also in death.

II.

The Christian's happiness in death. What is that? Our text tells us plainly: "To die is gain." The Apostle says this, not as man, nor as apostle, but as a Christian whose life is Christ. The Christian's death is his gain. Dying is winning to him. The unbelieving worldling's death is his total loss. Dying is losing to him. He loses his money and riches, his joys and pleasures, and all his expectations perish with him in death. His life is lost, and he is lost. He is "cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He opens his eyes after death in hell and in torments. Lazarus, on the contrary, is carried into Abraham's bosom. The Christian's death is all gain. Even his loss in death is gain to the Chris-

tian. He loses all pain, all sorrow, all weariness, all weakness, all weeping, all failing, all sinning, all fearing; all death he loses in death. What a happy loss! It is no loss at all; it is gain.

And what the Christian gains in death is all superabundant gain. He gains the crown of righteousness. He strove after righteousness, but always felt his failing in life; in death, he is crowned with it. He gains also the crown of life. All the enemies of his life, sin, death, and hell, are vanquished and driven from the field, when the Christian dies. He receives the crown of life: in death, the crown of life. Call it winning, call it leaping from the bottom to the top, call it turning darkness into light, death into life, and you have not yet expressed the Christian's happy gain in death. You can not express it. "For eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love Him." Such gain, such happiness, such triumph, we may fondly trust, our departed sister now enjoys. As Christ was her life, so death is her gain.

But it shall also be her gain, and your gain, and our gain in the object and aim of a Christian's life—to magnify Christ, His will, His gospel and His kingdom. It was gain in this, too, that the Apostle meant, when he said: "To die is gain to me." He meant gain also in the great object and aim of his life. He says in the verse preceding our text: "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." So shall it be in the dying of a Christian. His life's

work shall suffer no loss, but gain. We speak of the loss we sustain, when a loved one dies. And you, my friends, now know what it means. You have lost a loving wife and mother; you have lost a dutiful daughter, and many of you have lost a friend. What a meaning now the motto on the wall has: "What is home without a mother." But you comfort yourselves, and say: "Our loss is her gain." This is indeed much; it is great comfort. But is it all you can have? Is it all we all ought to have? No; it shall be your gain, our gain, too. It shall be gain in magnifying Christ. Is it not gain in this, when we see verified the Christian's happiness in life and death, and are strengthened in faith and the hope of the glory that is in Christ Jesus? Let Christ be magnified in your hearts, and this sad bereavement will also be gain to you. May it so prove to us all. Amen.

XXVIII.

The Lines Fallen in Pleasant Places.

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. Ps. 16: 6.

The words of our text might seem inappropriate for the present occasion. It speaks of pleasant and goodly things while we hear lamentations and see tears and feel sorrow. Those whose lives are full of labor and sorrow, toil and struggling, the orphans' grief and the widow's anguish, the pain of disease and the agony of death, are they those whose lines are fallen in pleasant places, who have a goodly heritage? We shall find that it is a very suitable text for the present mournful occasion. We shall find much comfort and admonition by considering the precious words:

"THE LINES ARE FALLEN UNTO ME IN PLEASANT PLACES, YEA, I HAVE A GOODLY HERITAGE."

1) In their meaning as spoken by the Messiah, and
2) As words put into the mouth of every Christian.

I.

The words of our text, as the entire psalm, are properly words of the Messiah. None but He could say: "Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." And He, the Messiah, whose body was put into the place of corruption, who suffered the agony of bitter death, whose days were evil upon the

earth, He declares: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." In His poverty and passion He contemplated His glorious inheritance. The Lord God, the Eternal Father, is the portion of His inheritance. The Glory of the Eternal Godhead belongs to Him, and the ineffable communion with the Father comforted Him. Knowing Himself as the Son of the Father, the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person He rejoices in His sorrow. "I have a goodly heritage." The Father will glorify me with my inheritance, the glory which I had with Him before the world began.

His is the glory of the Sonship, and also the glory of the Saviorship: in His suffering He not only contemplated His heavenly inheritance, but He also looked upon His suffering and its result as His goodly heritage: It fell to His lot, as the Father's Son, to go down upon the earth and save the sinners, because that was the Father's will. The Father said unto him: "Ask of me and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Again it is written: "The Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." And entering upon the work of redemption He declares: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places." The Messiah looks upon His lot as a glorious one. His delight is to perform His Father's will, to save sinners. "Yea, I have a goodly heritage." They are sinners, vile and corrupt, but He shed His blood to cleanse them from sin. His Father gave them to Him, and in the saints is all His delight, for He rendered them excellent.

This willing sacrifice of the glorious Son of God redeemed the world. Turn to Him to-day in your trouble. You may be sure of a gracious reception when you plead the redemption gained by Him. And you may be sure that He who willingly died for vile sinners, will delight to comfort His trusting believers. He is able to do so. He can point you to the glorious inheritance gained for you by His work. Since the Messiah spoke as He did, every Christian may say, at all times: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

II.

When the land of Canaan was distributed among the families of Israel, lots were cast, and when one received a rich piece of land, with a fertile soil, abundantly watered and well-shaded, to be held for ever by him and his descendants, he may well have spoken: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

Our departed brother did not inherit great wealth. But neither that nor anything else we might have inherited from our earthly parents would render our lot a happy one. Yet, in spite of all hardships, in spite of poverty even, yea, in spite of death the Christian may say: "The lines are fallen," etc.

By faith in the merit of Jesus, by virtue of their Brother's intercession the Christians are become the children of God, joint-heirs with Christ, possessors of the rich goods of their Father's house. It is a goodly heritage. What we inherit, we have not earned;

but owe it to another's labor and goodness. We have in no wise contributed anything towards obtaining our rich lot. Meditating on our corruption and well-deserved damnation, and realizing the great mercy of God in our adoption in Christ, we cry out in grateful tones: "Verily, we have a goodly heritage!"

It is a goodly heritage. Our lines are fallen in pleasant places. Our Father has given us the knowledge of His grace, the forgiveness of sins, the life everlasting. In baptism He has poured His spirit over us and by His Word and Sacrament He keeps us in the faith. Yea, God has given Himself to us. "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance." We have communion with Him. We desire to walk according to His will and are happy therein." "Thou art my portion, O Lord, I have said that I would keep thy words." The Lord is our portion, and we may rest satisfied in any situation, finding our happiness in Him, as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as having nothing and yet possessing all things. "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." "Here is my heaven on earth; who is not joyful, that he has won in Thee, O Lord, his joy and rest!" Who will not declare: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places!"

And when their hearts fail in death, their heavenly joy and rest is begun, for they are begotten again to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that passeth not away, reserved in heaven for them. They know that their bodies shall not be kept in corruption, while their souls have entered the presence where

there is fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore. On the last day they shall hear the words: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;" they shall look upon the portion fallen to their lot, watered by the stream of heaven, shaded by the tree of life; there they shall enjoy rest from all enemies and bask in the sunshine of the Divine Love; then shall they exclaim in bliss: "The lines are," etc.

In the hope of these things your husband and father conquered the fear of death. Do you also turn your attention thereto. Contemplate what the Father's grace and the Saviour's love gained for all and granted to you. How earnestly your good father, in love for you labored that he might leave you a goodly heritage: consider how dearly the Lord loves you in planning your eternal welfare. What your father left you, cannot of itself render you happy, but the inheritance of the saints in the light is bliss. Then follow the example of Jesus Christ and in the great trouble of to-day turn to the glory God has granted unto you, as sorrowful, but always rejoicing. Like Jesus Christ realize that your glory also consists in gladly bearing what the Father has placed upon you. Aye, as the passion of Jesus resulted in the glory of the Saviour, so should you suffer all tribulation in His spirit, so that we who suffer with Him, may also be glorified together. In the knowledge of God's love and the hope of future glory, we can say, at all times: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Amen.

XXIX.

The Good and Faithful Servant.

Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Matt. 25:21.

During the master's absence there was perhaps no difference to be noticed in the affairs of his servants. They were all treated pretty much alike. If anything, the slothful servant had a more pleasant time than the rest. The Christians on earth are not exalted above the others in eternal matters. Their great worth is not appreciated by men, who are dazzled by the pretensions of the slothful servants. But when at the master's return the day of reckoning is come, the good servants take their proper place. When the earthly labors of a good and faithful servant are ended, his Master speaks words which reveal the grandness of his past life and the glory of his future life. For our comfort in the present bereavement and all our sorrows, let us hear how on the great day of reckoning

THE GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT IS MADE THE RECIPIENT

1) Of his Master's commendation, and
2) Of his Master's bounty.

I.

When on the day of his death and on the last day the life-work of the Christian, God's good servant, is reviewed, the Master utters words of the very highest

praise. Scant praise fell to his lot while on earth. And when he studied the welfare of his soul above that of the body, men sneered at his folly. But thus the Lord judges: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." "Well done." I am greatly pleased with his work. His was a successful life. Honorable terms are applied: "Thou good and faithful servant." Why does the Lord apply these names? Because the servant was good and faithful. Christians are good servants, who because they have a good Master, love Him and are obedient to Him. They seek His glory above all things. His will is the rule of their lives. They are glad to serve Him. "Thou faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things." Every true Christian is faithful in the employment of the goods delivered unto him. He makes diligent use of the opportunities to hear the Word of God, and employs the means of grace for his growth in faith and holiness. He gladly puts his time and earthly goods to use in the furtherance of his Master's business. He speaks for Christ where he may and rejoices to throw his influence on the side of God. The wicked and slothful servant refuses to perform these things. But he that doeth them, shall be commended in the words: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

For servants this is the highest possible praise. Men who have attained success in wordly pursuits are considered to have spent successful lives; but if they have not minded spiritual things, their lives have been wasted. A grand life, successful and well-spent, has come to its close when a Christian dies, a man

who labored truly to perform his Lord's will. Whatever be his success, as men judge, the Master declares: "Well done, thou," etc.

This commendation reveals the great goodness and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our faithfulness is entirely due to our experience of our Master's mercy, who bought us with His blood. He gave us the talents we use. And every good work we perform is wrought by His Spirit. Nevertheless, it pleases Him to bestow sincere praise upon His servants. Again, we have deserved, for the many duties neglected, the many talents left more or less unemployed, to be cast away as wicked and slothful servants. Nevertheless, it pleases Him to take no account of the many transgressions of His believing servants—for His merit has taken away their sins—but gladly to acknowledge the little they have done for Him. His grace has made them good and faithful servants, His grace it is that makes so much of their faithfulness.

Without a doubt our departed brother, who so greatly prized the pure doctrine, so earnestly studied the will of God, so faithfully labored for Christ, ever ready to contribute his offerings, to give good counsel, to speak the word of admonition and consolation, without a doubt he who ever considered himself an unprofitable servant and put his sole trust in the merit of Jesus, has been received at the door of heaven with the commendation: "Well done, thou," etc.

Who shall describe the bliss this gracious commendation produces? The only thing we hope for is to be

accepted at all by virtue of our Saviour's merit. That alone shall save us on that dread day. And yet, while we are sorrowfully confessing: "Our lives have been ill-spent," shall the words strike our ears: "Well done?" Is it indeed so: in the presence of those who spurned us here and of those who are pressing near to rejoice with us, is He applying these honorable titles to us? Is our good Master, whose gracious countenance is the light of our lives, is He really pleased with us? Ah, then shall we be like them that dream, our mouths filled with laughter, our tongues with singing, our hearts with joy unspeakable!

II.

But that is not all: the good servant is also made the recipient of his Master's great bounty. "Thou hast been faithful over a few things: I will make thee ruler over many things." The good servant is not asking, because he has not worked for wages. Not even of an earthly sovereign will a faithful servant demand preferment to a more honorable position as his right. He who has been faithful over a few things is receiving a reward of grace when he is set over many things. We are saved by faith, freely, and owe our Saviour a more faithful service than we can ever render: nevertheless, faithfulness will be rewarded, graciously, richly.

What a glorious reward it is! "I will make thee ruler over many things." Little account was taken of the Christians here, there they are made rulers

and kings. It was their grief that they could do so little here for God, there they shall serve Him in great things. Here they could speak but little, for they knew in part only, there they shall praise Him with inspired hymns. A man's life is useful only in so far as it is spent in God's service: in all eternity we shall be God's servants in influential positions. And if already our meagre works of earth please Jesus Christ, what opportunity for hearing sweet words of commendation shall unfold themselves to those who are set over many things!

Enjoying this bountiful goodness, the good servant has entered into the joy of His Lord. It is a joy which His presence produces which flows from the Fountain of Bliss. It is the joy of those who from labor and weariness and sorrow have entered into rest and comfort and bliss. It is the joy of those from whom every taint of sin is removed and who feel the raptures of perfect holiness. It is the joy of those who taste something of the bliss of the blessed God, at whose right hand there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore. It is the joy of those who are beginning to realize a love which moved Jesus Christ to shed His blood, that the wicked servants might be saved. It is the joy of those who while they are enjoying the bliss of heaven and great rewards, know that they owe it entirely to their Master's grace and, casting their crowns before the throne, say: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power."

Will you complain, beloved friends, that the hour came which, as we hope, introduced your father to

such a joy? Will you regret that his labors are ended and his true happiness begun? He himself did not grieve, but, when he could no longer inquire in this temple, longed the more to behold the beauty of the Lord in the house above.

Knowing what pleasures our Master has prepared for us, let us acquit ourselves as good and faithful servants. As the eyes of a maiden look unto the hand of her mistress, so let our eyes, dear sister, wait upon the Lord, and as a faithful servant use the strength which the comfort of the Gospel and the Saviour's love holds out to you. Let the example of your father's life, beloved children, be a talent committed unto you, faithfully to be employed for your spiritual growth. Let us all bear in mind that the work of our departed brother must now be carried on by others, and the necessary gifts are in our possession: let us faithfully and zealously employ them. The eyes of our good Master are upon us! Amen.

XXX.

The Glories of Heaven.

And I knew such a man (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth), how that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words. 2 Cor. 12: 3, 4.

The heavenly land, which the soul of the departed Christian enters, is full of glory. The holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, have described it in sweet words. And holy

men of God, prophets and apostles, who had been permitted to catch a glimpse of the glory of the holy Jerusalem, have been moved by the Holy Ghost to testify unto us concerning what they had seen. St. Paul tells us how that he was caught up into paradise, the third heaven. In this wondrous visit he witnessed the great glory, and he specifies one thing: he mentions particularly that he heard unspeakable words. As the land whither a dear friend has gone is the theme of his friends' conversation, and as the land which we know we soon shall enter, occupies our thoughts, so let us now meditate on

THE GLORIES OF HEAVEN, AS EXHIBITED IN THE UNSPEAKABLE WORDS OF HEAVEN

We shall consider

1) The heavenly songs;
2) The heavenly knowledge;
3) The heavenly bliss.

I.

St. Paul, being caught up in paradise, no doubt, beheld upon the throne of majesty the Triune God and before Him myriads of angels and countless multitudes of the elect. The Lord is speaking to His people. The holy angels lift up their voices to answer. The blessed sing songs of praise. Paul hears the words. What are they? Why does he not repeat what he was permitted to hear? They are unspeakable and firstly because they are words spoken in the sublime language of heavenly beings.

Some of the heavenly songs are recorded in human language, but surely only in slight hints and faint echoes. As the speech of the degraded Australian tribes cannot express the power and sweetness of a cultivated language, so the human language is too poor, too weak, too cold to express the great glory, the surpassing beauty, the exquisite sweetness of the heavenly tongue. And since the entire surroundings of the blessed surpass all earthly glory, certainly the speech also of those whose souls are renewed after God's image, whose bodies are glorified, is vastly superior to the most powerful and beautiful language of earth. It is the language of the holy angels, the pure spirits that excel in strength. It is the language used by the Lord in heaven, more adequately to express his almighty power and love. Every word is a song of entrancing melody, strong as the rushing waters. Those are sweet words in which a mother expresses her love for her child; we are ravished to hear a choir of a thousand trained voices execute one of our grand chorals; but as for the words spoken in heaven, so sweet and touching, so full of power and bliss, eternity itself will be occupied in discovering their beauty.

II.

The words of themselves are unspeakable, and the more so, secondly, that they express conceptions which have no place in the hearts of earthly beings. The child cannot compose the oration of the man, for not merely the words, but rather the conceptions of the man are beyond its capacity. The words which St.

Paul heard were concerning things, the glory of which has not entered into the heart of man. The theme of all heavenly speech is: "Blessing and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne;" but this theme is unfolded in words which fully describe its majesty by those whose understanding is perfect. In heaven they look into the very heart of things. They understand how God is One in essence and Three in persons. They know what the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit are. They fully realize the unutterable corruption of man and continually grow in the knowledge of the ineffable love that caused Jesus Christ to die for sinners. They enjoy pleasures prepared by the all-glorious God which eye hath not seen nor ear heard. All these things we can now not even conceive—where then are the human words into which the heavenly praise thereof might be translated? We can talk about the glories of the sunny Italy clime, but how different is the description given by him who dwelt there! Now, we know in part and now we speak as children and need to lay our fingers upon our lips while we exclaim: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" but when we shall plunge into this depth and when we shall see God as He is, we shall repeat in glorious versions the hymn: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty which was and is to come!"

III.

But to know God is to love Him, and the third reason why the words of the blessed are unspeakable is

that they proceed from ineffable bliss. Great joy will burst forth in unwonted eloquence. The words in which a pardoned culprit expresses his gratitude could not be uttered by him who is being led to the gallows. There are even here on earth feelings so deep that forsaking speech we have recourse to the melody and power of music. But St. Peter speaks of a heavenly joy, unspeakable and full of glory. It is unspeakable up to that blessed hour when it is felt. But when it is felt, when the blessed fully enjoy the communion of God and all saints, the freedom from sin and the delight of perfect holiness, the knowledge of God's glory and the sweetness of the Saviour's love, who can now conceive with what glorious speech this bliss shall inspire them, in what seraphic melodies the song shall be developed: "Alleluia! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth! Let us be glad and rejoice and give honor to Him."

Such are the glories of heaven, as exhibited in the unspeakable words of heaven. Now already the word of God, spoken in human language, is our joy and strength; now already we love to hear His praises sung in earthly voices; and who shall describe the bliss of him who hears the ineffable words of love proceeding from the heavenly throne, and takes up, to the accompaniment of angelic harps, the hymn of the heavenly choir which springs from unspeakable joy and unfolds glorious mysteries?

And who are they that join in this blessed song? "These are they who came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The Lamb of God suffered un-

utterable woe upon the cross that, cleansed from sin, we might utter unspeakable words of bliss in heaven. Think now of your departed husband and father and friend, he who washed his robes, as we have reason to believe, in the blood of the Lamb, he who so loved the sure Word of God which opens the realms of heaven to the sinner, as he now occupies his place among the ransomed host and strikes his harp with gladness and is making a joyful noise unto the Lord. More than this, think now of Him who in His love gained this bliss for you and for us all. Believe it that He who desires us to enter His heavenly temple permits great tribulations to fall upon us that our hope and longing may be kept fixed on His love and His happy land. You may well utter mournful words in the great loss you have sustained, but when you know all these things you will utter unspeakable words of praise to the Eternal Wisdom and Love for this very trial. You should say: Now already the love of God, in my great sorrow, is becoming more and more sweet to me. But

"When within that lovely paradise
At last I safely dwell,
From out my soul what songs shall rise,
What joy my lips shall tell,
While holy saints are singing
Hosannas o'er and o'er,
Pure Hallelujahs ringing
Around me evermore.
Innumerous choirs before the shining throne
Their joyful anthems raise,
Till heaven's glad halls are echoing with the tone

Of that great hymn of praise,
And all its host rejoices,
And all its blessed throng
Unite their myriad voices
In one eternal song." Amen.

FOR MIDDLE AGED WOMEN.

XXXI.

Patient Submission to the Will of God.

The will of the Lord be done. Acts 21:14.

Whatsoever the Lord pleaseth, that He doeth. For who can resist His will? His is the power to enforce His will and what He determines, must come to pass. The measure of our success and the length of our lives depend on the will of the Sovereign Lord. Whatsoever pleaseth Him, that must be done.—The children of the world have constituted fate and chance as the rulers of their destinies. At the death of their friend they will say: "It was her fate;" or, "She chanced to sicken and die." "Who can resist the will of fate or chance?" But if we were indeed under the rulership of heartless fate or blind fortune, our misfortunes would crush our spirit or fill us with impotent rage. And if we knew nothing concerning God beyond the truth that His will must be done, our God were an idol, a tyrant as relentless as "stern fate." But what we know concerning our God, leads us not only to admit that His will must be done, but also to say: "The will of the Lord be done;" it inculcates

PATIENT SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD, AS

1) Our duty, and
2) The source of great blessings.

I.

When it was foretold that Paul, journeying to Jerusalem, would be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, there was at first bitter weeping among the brethren; but seeing his own readiness to submit to God's will; his willingness, if it pleased God, to suffer bondage and death even, they composed themselves, they would not oppose their own pleasure against what they plainly perceived to be the will of God the Father, of the Lord Jesus Christ, and though it signified the loss of their well-beloved apostle, they submissively spoke: "The will of the Lord be done."

It is our sacred duty to submit to the will of the Lord, not only because we have known Him as our Sovereign Lord, whom all men are bound to obey, in whose hand our lives are, who may take at any time what He has given, but also because we have known Him as our wise and loving Lord, who having yielded up His own Son for us adopted us in Jesus as His children, and assured us of His lovingkindness towards us, deserves our most cheerful trust. He who rules the sparrow's fall is our loving Father in Jesus and rules our lives with a good and gracious will. All things work together for good unto them that love God, for the breaking and hindering of every evil counsel and will which would not let us hallow God's name nor let His kingdom come, for the strengthening and preserving of us steadfast in His word and faith unto our end. Paul will be delivered unto the Gentiles, but he will be kept in the faith; and captive Paul will bring

many in Rome unto Christ. It is God's gracious will that in all afflictions we learn our great sinfulness and utter helplessness, that we be driven to cast ourselves upon His almighty power and grace, that through us His name may be glorified. Whatever befalls us, His love has sent it and His wisdom has selected it. He knows what will make us better Christians, and we do not always know it. He knows that we are able to bear, and we do not. We know that if we had the choice our natural blindness and perversity would lead us astray. It is the duty of children to forbear questioning the wisdom of their loving Father's choice. We must bend our will to His, because He is our Lord, and we must blend our will in His because we believe in His increasing love and unfailing wisdom. "The Christian's maxim e'er must be: What pleaseth God, that pleaseth me."

There are times when it seems as though we could never reconcile ourselves to God's ways. In Cesarea there was bitter weeping and hearts were breaking. Your hearts are crying out: "Oh, that our dear mother had been spared us a little longer!" Dearly beloved, recollect who it is that called her hence. He loves you with more than a mother's love. He is teaching you to cast yourselves upon Him. Bear in mind that He will keep these children in His loving care. Never forget that but for this wisdom and love He would have spared you this sorrow. You may not understand Him, but believe in Him! Heed His assurance more than the sad lamentations of your hearts. Ask the Lord to work

in you, by His almighty power, a willing compliance with His will:

"Renew my will from day to day;
Blend it with Thine; and take away
All that now makes it hard to say,
Thy will be done."

Do so, and you shall be greatly blessed.

II.

In Christian submissiveness there is the strength to bear our heavy burdens. As soon as the child ceases its struggling and nestles to its mother's bosom, it perceives her endearment. The self-willed man hinders himself from seeing the purpose of God: submissiveness beholds His goodness and is strengthened thereby. In great trouble we know not whither to steer; as soon as we realize that the Lord is at the helm, we enjoy the feeling of security. He that relies upon God's will, derives therefrom divine strength. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Submissiveness is not the resignation of a crushed spirit. The soldier who is dragged to the attack, who doubts the wisdom of the general, is a spiritless being, but he who has submitted to his directions, convinced of his generalship, goes bravely on. God inspires them with strength who confide in Him. Finally, it is a bitter cup which is placed to unwilling lips: but it becomes consecrated when we take it up in the spirit of the prayer: "The will of the Lord be done." The spirit of submission transforms the grievous conflict into a willing sacrifice.

And more: as God's purpose will be effected only in those who yield to Him, submissiveness serves to make us better and happier persons, for God's good will is our salvation, holiness, and bliss. God's purpose is to crucify our flesh, to draw us unto him; submitting, we find ourselves nearer to God. The very act of submission is a clinging to God and that can only result in our betterment. The spirit of sacrificing ourselves for God's sake, must render us more loving and kind to all men. And above all: complete submission to God's will means perfect bliss. In heaven all things shall be subdued unto Him, that God may be all in all. "Of Him and through Him and to Him are all things," and the glory of God is beheld by those who perfectly merge their will into His. Even so Jesus Christ said: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father." It can only result in happiness to know ourselves as of one accord with God. Is it not a blissful thought to know that in us the will of the Eternal One is being done? We can be happy only when we rest in God, and Christian submissiveness yields a foretaste of heavenly bliss. Because God is good, we should submit to Him in all obedience and faithfulness.

On her death-bed our sister spoke: "The will of the Lord be done." It was a bitter hour when she became convinced that she must part, for a time, from her husband and children. But she committed her cares to the Lord and her family to His love. So she conquered the fear of death and dying in the Lord, her entire being is in harmony with her Lord.

Do you also, beloved mourners, submit now to God's will. He who gave up His own Son for your sake, has taken your beloved wife away in His goodness. Believe that and you will be richly comforted, strengthened and blessed. Cast yourselves upon His love and your wounded hearts shall be bound. Do not mistrust Him and you shall behold his lovingkindness. Death came by sin, but as the Lord ennobles these things by taking them up in His wise plans, do you also ennoble your loss by making it a sacrifice willingly rendered because the Lord demanded it. Learn to be pleased with what pleases God, and you shall have a foretaste of heavenly bliss. The blessed derive their bliss from their union with God, therefore let us merge our will in God's will and pray: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Amen.

XXXII.

The Glorious Hope of the Resurrection of the Body.

It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. 1 Cor. 15: 42, 43.

After our services here in the church, we will accompany these mortal remains to their last restingplace, and, calling upon God in prayer and song, lower the coffin into the grave, and the funeral-rites will be ended. But will that be the end? Having cast a look upon the dear form, have we really beheld it for the last time? You know what our fathers called their burial-places:

"God's acre," the acre of which God is the husbandman. The farmer sows his wheat in the acre and, returning after a season, gathers therefrom a golden harvest. What we are about to do to-day on God's acre, is not the end, but merely the beginning. We have performed our work in the sowing, but after a season the owner of the acre will appear and perform a miracle. Our text has foretold it. It tells us of

THE GLORIOUS HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

Let us speak

1) Of that which is promised, and
2) Of those who have this hope.

I.

"It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power." We believe in the resurrection of the body which perished in death. Upon the sowing follows the harvesting; if it be a common acre, we are reasonably sure of it; if it be God's acre, we are absolutely sure of it. What is sown, that is raised.

We believe in the resurrection of the body in glory. Shall the child of God take this body so wasted and disfigured with disease, into the realms of bliss? "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." The very same body will be raised, that which was sown, but how gloriously changed, how wondrously trans-

figured! Here it was corruptible, death devoured its strength and form, it fell apart in dust, and the worms preyed upon it; it is raised in incorruption, death can nevermore blight nor reproach it, it is clothed with immortality. It is sown in dishonor, into the grave is lowered a vile body, ill-looking, branded with shame, for it is dead, and death, the consequence of sin, is dishonorable: it is raised in glory, living, lovely, dazzling, bright as the sun, like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is sown in weakness, a body enfeebled by sin, unable to resist death, now an impotent and senseless mass: it is raised in power; immortality and bliss invigorate the bodies of those who by the grace of God are made like unto the holy angels that excel in strength.

What is raised is that which was sown, but ah, how much more excellent! You drop a flower-seed into the soil, a black, unsightly little grain: behold, after a little while, the luxuriant bush, full of blossoms, fragrant and beautiful! An acorn is planted, a little corn which an infant may toss about, and there groweth therefrom the mighty oak, deeply-rooted, storm-defying. So also is the resurrection of the dead. "It is sown in corruption, it is," etc.

It is raised in glory, for it is destined to clothe again the soul, the soul which is sinful no more, but perfectly renewed after the image of God. A beggar wears rags, but a king is clothed with rich garments, and that is seemly. And shall not our souls, raised in heaven to royal dignity, be clothed with a royal dress, shall not our bodies be raised in power and honor?

God grants unto every body glory which suits its condition (v. 40). To enjoy heavenly bliss there must needs be heavenly bodies. To express the feelings of the soul, which is filled with the goodness of God, there is need of a tongue which can speak words of heavenly power and sweetness. These poor eyes cannot bear to look into the sun, but "in my flesh shall I see God, whom mine eyes shall behold." Therefore, it is sown in weakness, but it is raised in power. This body, in its sinful condition and natural weakness, subject to earthly wants and the laws of time and space, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. But "we are waiting for the redemption of our body," when "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Verily, at this moment it doth not yet appear. "It seems as all were over now, the heavy limbs, the soulless brow.—Yet through these rigid limbs once more a noble life, ere long, shall pour. Arrayed in glorious grace shall these vile bodies shine, and every shape and every face look heavenly and divine." "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption," etc.

Lay this truth to your hearts, dear friends, as you look upon the soulless body of your mother. It is a sorrowful sight, but as the husbandman does not mourn when he goes forth to sow his seed, so let us, going upon God's acre, comfort our sorrow with the glorious hope: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption," etc. Have we the right to cherish this hope? Let us see.

II.

When the resurrection of the dead is preached, some mock and say, it is utterly impossible. "Thou fool, that which thou sowest, is not quickened, except it die." Shall He, who causeth wheat to grow from the decaying seed, be unable to raise the dead? Believing in the almighty power of God, we have reason to believe in the resurrection of the body in glory?

But a living hope thereof will not be created by the knowledge of God's omnipotence merely. By nature all men are the children of wrath, the sons of corruption, the heirs of damnation. All that are in the graves shall come forth at the last day, but they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. Men who reject the salvation of Jesus and continue in the evil way, who neglecting their souls, study the welfare of their bodies only, are like unto tares which, falling to the ground, are useless and, sprung up, are gathered and burned in the fire. They are sown in corruption and weakness and dishonor; they are raised to despair and shame and everlasting contempt.

We, too, were by nature the children of wrath. But we have heard and believed that Jesus Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. Jesus Christ, enduring in His holy body shame and contempt and death, hath brought life and immortality to light. Rising in a glorious body, He prepared the way for the resurrection in glory. And they who, having deserved eternal death, in body and soul, grasp the merit of Jesus' death, can triumphantly

exclaim, for body and soul: "Oh death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Having this hope, the Christian does not live for time, but for eternity. His bliss is not in temporal things, but in heaven. He takes care not to defile that body in the service of sin, which is destined to eternal glory. He is ready to suffer in the body, knowing that the last day will crown those who received honorable wounds in the service of Christ. In such an one the promise of our text shall be fulfilled, and such an one was our departed sister. She knew in all the pains of her last illness that she had earned the pain of damnation. And though she had striven to keep under her body by not permitting its needs to hinder her in her care for spiritual things, she met death by placing her confidence, not in her well-spent life, but on the victory of Jesus Christ. Her conversation was in heaven, from whence also she looked for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And our Lord Jesus Christ shall change and fashion our vile body like unto His glorious body. Gladly trust this lifeless body to His care and in the present distress trust yourselves to His grace. If our bodies in death are in His hands, He will surely also care for them in this life. He who is ready to honor our bodies, is certainly studying the welfare of your souls also. Through death the body passeth unto glory, and in tribulation our souls are tried and purified. Let us trust ourselves in the hands of the Lord. "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." Amen.

XXXIII.

Address.

For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Phil. 1:21.

When death comes to the relief of one whose life was embittered by sorrow and suffering, the godless will perhaps say: "Her death was a great blessing to her; it delivered her from so much woe; she is better off dead than alive." But even if death were man's utter extinction, as they profess to believe, would it not be a bitter mockery to bid a sorrowing household welcome an event which utterly and forever has robbed them of their beloved mother? But as death, to the unbeliever, means utter loss, the loss of life and hope, the agonies of the eternal death, their talk of death being a gain, the deliverance from earthly woe, is vanity and mockery indeed.

Your hearts, beloved, which are aching at the great loss you have sustained, are now yearning after comfort. Let me say unto you: "Weep not! Her death was a great blessing to her; she is better off now than before; death was a great gain to her." Among Christians, these words are flowing with comfort. We have not lost those who died. And they who died gained great things. They are delivered from all sorrow and suffering. And that perhaps is the least gain. The most precious gain is that which results from their peculiar relation to Jesus Christ, and which indeed, comprises all blessings. Because to the Christians to live is Christ, to them to die is gain.

It is a peculiar expression: "To me to live is Christ," but it expresses peculiarly well the real nature of the Christian life. It is a life in which Christ is everything, the principle and the object, the glory and the happiness. Christ is our life, the principle and, as it were, the soul of our life. It is Christ that lives in us. Appropriating the blood and righteousness of Christ, by faith, we are spiritually alive; we live by faith, but faith is the product, the breath of our inner life which is Christ. The power by which we lay hold of God and walk in holiness is Christ within us. Christ is one with His members, He lives in His members. When Paul believes and prays and works and preaches; Christ is doing these things. "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." "To me to live is Christ," my real life is a life which Christ lives. Consequently, the Christian's life is an expression of this life-power within him; he lives Christ, that is, he lives a life in which Christ is everything to him, a life which to him is the medium for enjoying Christ and expressing His goodness and power. Because the soul lives in the members, the members live by the soul, for the soul, they live the life of the soul. Because Christ was the life of Paul, Paul lived by Christ and for Christ, his life was imbued with Christ, Christ's grace and glory and will was the object and happiness of his life. His life was to lay hold of Christ's grace and to proclaim Christ's glory. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me." He belonged not unto himself, but

unto the Lord, he lived not unto himself, but unto Christ. He was willing to live in the flesh, because he could thereby serve the Lord. He judged of all things by bringing them into reference to Christ. He loved the Bible as Christ's Work, the Lord's Supper as Christ's Sacrament, his dearest friends were the brothers of Christ, his sweetest work the performance of Christ's will, his only comfort in his many transgressions and his daily strength the grace of Christ. Whom had he in heaven and upon earth but Christ? Christ was in his heart and in his walk. To him to live was to use and exercise and express, though in much weakness, the power of Christ's holiness: to him to live was Christ.

Paul was willing to live in the flesh, for such a life is worth living. There are those to whom to live is sin, and their lives are vain and unhappy, but what a glorious thing it is to live a life which is the medium of tasting Christ's goodness and expressing His honor and proclaiming His glory?

But how little after all it expresses the glory of His power, how much there is in us poor, sinful beings which is not the result of Christ's grace and holiness! It is the best thing on earth, but there is something far better. Paul desired to depart and to be with Christ, and when death shall deliver us from this weak and sinful body, how much we shall gain by being brought into perfect communion with Christ, our Life!

Our life is hid with Christ in God, but when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory, and, untrammeled by weakness,

untroubled by sin, live a life of perfect holiness and unspeakable joy. But of this life Christ is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, all in all, and we shall see Him and have Him and enjoy Him as He is. The glory of Christ transfigures the blessed and their life in a perfect expression and use of His grace and holiness. Here Christ is our life, but we know so little of Him, there we shall know Him even as we are known by Him. It is a happy life on earth, for in it we enjoy His grace somewhat and a noble life, for it is employed in His service, but what a glorious life it will be when the fulness of His grace is enjoyed by us and eternity is an uninterrupted service of praise! It is the grief of our earthly life that we so imperfectly live in Christ and grieve Him so often, but we shall be perfectly satisfied when we awaken with His likeness, transformed from glory to glory. Our life in the flesh is a longing after Christ which shall be satisfied in the eternal life. Here we sometimes long overmuch after earthly things; but there we shall only drink from the pure river of water of life descending from the throne of God and of the Lamb. Christ is our light and strength in the darkness of the present time, but Oh, the bliss of that city of which the Lamb is the light. We love to praise Him in the house of God, but what a shout of joy shall arise when the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb themselves are the temple! To us to live in the flesh is Christ, but Oh, the gain of death which brings us into full communion with Christ! We desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.

To her who has departed this life to live has been Christ. Christ lived in her, for she lived a truly Christian life among us. Christ's Word and grace were her strength. Willingly she performed the work to which Christ called her; where she failed therein, she sought His forgiveness; earnestly she desired more ably to perform it. She longed for the time when Christ should be all in all in her life, and now, though dead, she lives indeed. Her death was a great blessing to her. She is better off than we are, now she is with Christ in the perfect life. Will you mourn that happy day, when she, for whose happiness you would willingly sacrifice your very lives, gained all good things by the grace of Jesus?

In this dark hour you should recollect and say: "To us to live is Christ." You may feel as though you would rather depart this life this minute and be relieved of the present bitterness, but your lot is to live in the flesh—Christ is your life, live in order to be comforted by His grace and to show forth the power of His goodness and holiness. Have you nothing to live for? Live for Christ, like Christ, in Christ. Let Christ be your all, your happiness and your pattern, and comforted, you will the more earnestly look forward to the happy day, when you shall be with Christ and with your mother who is with Him. Look to Christ and you shall not be confounded. For if to us to live is Christ, the death of our dear ones and our own death is our gain. Amen.

XXXIV.

The Continuing City; the Goal of Our Pilgrimage.

Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. Heb. 13:14.

Like as a child who is bereft of his parents, repulsed by his relatives and thrust away by a heartless community, who has no abiding-place, but is driven by harsh words from the homes of men and knows not where to lay his head nor whither to turn for comfort, suffers bitter woe and terror in its disappointment, uncertainty and loneliness, even so the children of men are become wanderers upon the face of the earth; for they have here no continuing city, their fondest hopes are doomed to disappointment, no earthly thing can give them rest, and at the appearance of death they are cast into an abyss of doubt and loneliness. But let such forsaken child be adopted into a Christian family, let it realize that its wanderings are ended and a father's care and a mother's love encompass it, can you realize the joy of its heart and the rest of its soul? Surely, we can, for we, too, had no continuing city, and we found one and our life is a hasty journey to reach our home. In this hour, having before us the uncertainty and vanity of all earthly things, let us direct our attention to

THE CONTINUING CITY, THE GOAL OF OUR PILGRIMAGE.

1) They are its citizens and shall reach it who know that they have here no continuing city, but seek the one to come by faith in Jesus.

2) In all earthly losses they are comforted by the hope of the continuing city.

3) And the vanity of all earthly things should urge us the more earnestly to seek it.

I.

The end of those who mind earthly things and seek their rest in the lusts of the world is destruction, they experience disappointment, and reach damnation.

But the children of God know that they have here no continuing city, that nothing earthly is abiding, that they must leave this world, that the world itself will pass away. And they know more. They know that there is a city to come which hath foundations, whose glory fadeth not, and that God has prepared this city for them. They know, above all, that the gates of the heavenly city are closed against all defilement of sin and self-righteousness, but also that Jesus' blood has washed away their defilement and that unto all who knock in the name of Jesus it will be opened. And this city they seek, but not after the manner of the uncertain search of adventurers, but after the manner of exiles who are returning from banishment to their native city. They have here no continuing city, but confess that they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth, who refuse to be retarded in their homegoing by the pursuit of worldly pleasures. They seek the city to come whose freedom has been bestowed upon them in baptism, their engrossing hope is the coming of the Lord Jesus to take them home, and their walk is regulated by the law of the heavenly city.

Our departed sister, in the profession of her faith in Jesus Christ, her love for the Gospel of the kingdom of God, her manifest denial of the charms of worldly honor and riches, her readiness, aye, her desire to depart and be with Christ, proved herself a citizen of the continuing city. And all who thus seek the city of God by faith in Jesus enter it.

In the hour of death they enter it. Therefore against death and against all earthly losses we find rich comfort in the hope of the continuing city.

II.

The faith of the unbeliever: In the grave is nought but corruption, and beyond the grave utter darkness, engenders the dismal thought at the death of a sweet child: Nevermore, again shall we behold this lovely form! at the death of a loving mother the dread thought: Forever gone are all opportunities to show her our gratitude whose debt we now so strongly feel, at the end of a life full of disappointments the blank despair: Now indeed all is at an end—and the judgment is at hand. Death proclaims the sinner's guilt, but death itself does not reveal the Saviour's mercy. And where there is no hope of a continuing city or the false hope of gaining it aside from Christ's merit, there death can be met only in deadly sorrow, be it manifest in black despair or be it veiled under unnatural indifference, the sorrow of those which have no hope.

We Christians likewise experience the vanity of all earthly things. Our plans miscarry, the work of our

hands crumbles, our friends are taken from us. All flesh is as grass and all the glory of man fadeth away as the flower thereof. We have here no continuing city. But oh, the comfort of the thought, we are seeking one to come! They may drive us from their cities, we are seeking one to come. What though we suffer earthly losses, the continuing city remains, and our treasure lies hidden there, a treasure uncorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. There is no sense of insecurity in those who lose what they need not, but retain the possession of that which they prize above all things. The homeless child feels untold terrors in the raging storm, but boldly he pushes through who is hastening to reach the shelter of his father's home. We too must fade away in death, but dying we enter the continuing city—thank God, that all earthly things pass away: losing all we gain everything.

In the great loss you have sustained, beloved friends, remember that we are seeking a continuing city. So good and gentle she was, so good and gentle she is still, and her love is made perfect. Is it so deplorable that she had to leave you just as affairs were beginning to shape themselves so as to insure her a more pleasant and restful lot: when you know that she left you to enter the perfect rest and happiness above? There ought to be no sense of loss in those who believe in the life everlasting and have reason to hope that their beloved ones died in the Lord.

And the sweetest comfort of all: we sinners have here no continuing city, we sinners can hope for the

city to come because Jesus loved us. Unto us who deserve death and damnation the grace of Jesus is revealed, and His love comforts us in the greatest loss.

The more we feel our loss, the more eagerly we turn to Jesus to be comforted by Him. And that is God's good and gracious will: the bitter experience that we have here no continuing city, should urge us to seek, more and more earnestly, the eternal city.

III.

As this corpse lies before you, so shall you also die—and whither will death take you? Blessed is he who finds entrance into the continuing city by the grace of Jesus—have you all this hope? The Lord desires to raise these questions in our hearts to-day.

There is no creature which can be our stay: let us cling to Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever, the king of the continuing city. The loss of her who has been, dear brother, the friend of your youth and the companion of your trials, has wounded you sorely: then, even as your children, bereft of their mother, now cling the more closely to their father, do you also seek more earnestly the communion of Jesus, the Lover of your Soul? Does your heart tremble at the thought of what is to become of your motherless family? There is no earthly stay, but cast your care upon the faithful Lord. And to you, dear children of our sainted sister, I will say this: now in the hour of death you realize better than before

that all corrections your sainted mother administered to you were prompted by her great love—so the great sorrow which your heavenly Father has permitted to encompass you is one of His methods for drawing you closer to Himself and keeping your attention directed to the continuing city.

God, our Lord, directs things so as to teach us through disappointments and losses, that we have here no continuing city because we are sinners, in order that the homeless child may long for a home and the sinner for a Saviour. And we Christians need to re-learn the lesson daily. Bitter grief turns us against this sinful world and opens our hearts to cry:

"Lord Jesus, King of Paradise,
Oh, keep me in Thy love,
And guide me to that happy land
Of perfect rest above." Amen.

XXXV.

Address.

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them. Rev. 14: 13.

Little did I think when I spoke a few weeks ago upon the sad scenes of death, that we should so soon have the full reality of all that was mentioned—I spoke at the time of a mother being torn from her child, of a sister taken from the family circle, of a daughter leaving us, and of that separation of the

closest of all earthly ties, of wedlock. And now, we have all this sorrow of death in one departure; for to-day the Lord has gathered us about the earthly remains of one who held to some one each of the mentioned degrees of relationship.

With her departure, there has gone from us a dutiful daughter, a kind sister, a cheerful, loving wife that made the home bright and dear, a mother with all a mother's devoted love for her child. Were it my duty to paint sadness and sorrow, it would be easy for me to point to this scene of grief, and let it speak louder than all words. But, I am not here to cause tears, but to dry them. I am not here to show the victory of death, but the victory of a dear Christian; not to show the darkness of the grave, but the light which illuminates it. It is her last and most glorious victory that changes this whole scene from one of the darkest to the brightest hope. When I stood at her bedside the evening before the Lord called her home, she said: "Pastor, if it had not been for the Lord, I could not have gone through all this," and it sounded to me very much like the words of David: "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul." She confessed that without the Lord she could not have gone through it, but that the Lord helped her. And thus also we may say with her, "If it were not for the Lord we could not bear this sorrow, but, thanks be to our kind and merciful Lord, He helps and cheers us in this hour, even in this depth of sorrow. He has a word of sweetest comfort

for us. Oh! that this word would enter our hearts and soothe our sorrow and heal our wounded spirits.

For this purpose let us now attend to the word which is found recorded in the Revelation of St. John in the 13th verse of the 14th chapter and reads as follows:

BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE IN THE LORD FROM HENCEFORTH: YEA SAITH THE SPIRIT, THAT THEY MAY REST FROM THEIR LABORS, AND THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM.

It is not of all dead that we can say "They are blessed." Alas! there are times when we can offer no consolation. But of those who die in the Lord, we may triumphantly exclaim: "They are blessed." But who are they that die in the Lord? Do those die in the Lord, who, looking back upon their life, pronounce it perfect, saying: My life, my walk and conversation before my God are without spot or blemish? No, those who die thus, die trusting in themselves, and will receive the just reward of their self-righteous lives. Nor do those die in the Lord, who, knowing their sin, despair because they either do not know or do not accept the forgiveness of their sin, in Christ, their Saviour. Nay, those who die in the Lord are such as die in the true faith in, and in real love toward, that Saviour. They indeed know the failings of their life, they see that their life has not been that of a blameless servant; their shortcomings, neglect, and

transgressions are before them and pain them sorely, but they look away to Calvary where hanging to the cross they see the Lamb of God that hath taken their sins upon himself, and is there suffering the punishment which they deserved. They feel weary and are heavy laden, but they cast their burden upon Him, who has promised rest to all such. Their trust and reliance is in the Lord's mercy and grace. They find their peace in the Lord's suffering and death. They are poor in themselves, but rich in Christ, they have no robe of self-righteousness, but they have the spotless shining white garment of Christ's righteousness, they die in full reliance upon their Saviour, and therefore they die in the Lord. And because by this faith they are united with Christ, therefore, there is in them also a warm love towards Christ. They indeed love the blessings of their Heavenly Father, even those blessings which are temporal and earthly. But they do not let the love for the gift take their heart away from Him who has given it. Therefore, when the hour comes in which God calls them away from these temporal blessings to those that are eternal, they are willing to leave the earth with all that is dearest upon it to go to Him who is far dearer to them than all earthly blessings. These, therefore, die in the love of God, and thus in the Lord. With a heart of confiding faith and tender love they depart this life. These are the dead of whom we may say that they die in the Lord and are blessed. And now from her life and confession we may also say of this departed sister, she died in the Lord. For when I spoke to her upon her

death-bed, she found rest and peace in Christ only; she confessed herself a sinner, but looked to the Saviour as her refuge; even in her pain and weakness she thanked Him for His lovingkindness. As she walked through the valley of the shadow of death she feared no evil, for the Lord was her comfort and strength. Therefore, we may even amid tears cry out triumphantly: "Blessed is she for she died in the Lord." Ah, beloved, think of what it means to be blessed thus by God Himself! God means not an ordinary blessing when He pronounces those blessed who die in the Lord. What he means is explained in our text: "Yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them."

First, then, their blessedness consists in resting from their labors. They need not raise the hand of toil through a weary life, they need no longer eat their bread in the sweat of their brow. They rest: rest from all worry and trouble, all tiresome labor of body and mind. There is now for them no more battling against reverses of fortune, no distress in sickness, no pain, no offended feeling, no inward unspeakable grief. From all this labor of trouble, of fighting, of pain she is now free, forever with the Lord, she is now forever "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." Far away, forever separated from this wicked and false world, resting now in the arms of Him who loved her unto death. No power of earth or hell can wrest her from Him. As she was a few years ago an earthly bride, she is now eternally a heavenly bride. Blessed is she, for she is at rest.

Our text goes on to say: "And their works do follow them." The works of the Christian do not go before and buy them Heaven, but follow after them, after they have entered Heaven on the merit of Christ. Then Christ rewards the smallest works of His beloved. Indeed, the Christian will be surprised that God should think of rewarding them who have come so far short of what they ought to have been. But Christ will mention all their good works before all the angels and saints. Then Christ will make good His promise: "Your labor is not in vain in the Lord." The few simple services of Christians may seem very insignificant to themselves, but they are highly valued by their Saviour. Let us not think lightly of a Christian's good works. Christ shall repay them by rewards eternal and glorious beyond compare. No good work that is done as service to the Lord will remain unrewarded. And so we may also say of this sister, "Her works do follow her." These works may have seemed to her not worth the mention, yea, she perhaps, saw nothing in them but her own weakness and sinfulness, but Christ notices the use she made of that special gift He had bestowed upon her. He considered her quiet, faithful attendance upon her household duties, her care for her child, and her endeavors to teach him to pray to that Saviour who had cleansed him in Baptism. And now all these works are repaid far beyond all that she expected or that we can conceive. Indeed, here death has not gained a victory, but Christ, who won and purchased her from death, has been victorious.

Let us, therefore, no longer think of her as of one that has gone forever, but let us think of her as of one whom we shall see in that blessed condition which we have just described. What no eye hath seen, and no ear hath heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, that is hers forever.

Think not of her but in this way that you say: "Blessed is she for she dies in the Lord, she is resting from her labors, and her works do follow her." May God strengthen and comfort you through this His word. Amen!

FOR ELDERLY MEN AND WOMEN.

XXXVI.

Address.

Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people Genesis 25: 8.

The patriarch Abraham had led a most eventful life. Called by God from out of his fatherland and from his kindred and from his father's house, he had heeded the divine summons and entered upon a pilgrimage that was not soon ended. Though the carrier of the promise that in his seed all nations of the earth should be blessed, this favor of God did not shield him from the envy of the foe, from the sorrow of affliction, from the fire of temptation, and from the anxiety of waiting for the fulfillment of the promise. Endangered without by the enemy, harassed within by unbelief and unthankfulness in his own household, chastened by God in severe trial, he finally triumphed over all seemingly adverse circumstances and was privileged to see, with his own eyes, the gracious outworking of the promise by which he had been wondrously led. Thus he became a shining example of implicit faith in the word of his God, a pattern set for our imitation. After such a life the words of our text are fraught with a meaning that lies deeper than the surface.

Still, he was but a man, the father of the faithful; and the mercy of God that made him what he was, is still powerful to the raising up of children unto Abraham, sons and daughters of whom we know it can be said even as it was said of Abraham that he gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.

Indeed, we have every confidence that our departed brother was such a one. May this thought comfort us; that, like Abraham, he has been gathered to his people.

Though the life of every Christian is wonderful, even that of the youngest baptized babe whose spirit wings its way from its mother's arms, in showing the amazing abundance of God's grace, most wonderful and varied must be the life of that Christian, though the humblest among the lowly, whose head was bleached by the sun and wind of many a summer's calm and of winter's storm. Such a one can tell, with Abraham, of battles won and of victories lost, of temptations from without, of evil promptings from within, of trials from above. He may not, like Abraham, have been literally called out from a land of idolatry, and have been bidden to rear his altar in a foreign land; but, spiritually, he sets out and departs no less truly than did Abraham of old. When, through the working of the Spirit in baptism or in the Word, faith is planted in his heart, and he becomes a child of God, he leaves the land of darkness, the kingdom of sin, and is most certainly brought forth into another

field of action, into the kingdom of light. And, then too, every day is to witness anew a turning the back upon weakness and sin, and a going forward in strength and holiness. In conversion and sanctification the Christian most liberally heeds the voice of God, calling him to be up and away from the fatherland of sinfulness in which he was, and from the kinship of iniquity that was his by birth.

Of such a calling and going out, our venerable brother had ample experience, and we, who are fellow-pilgrims with him, have had every token that his heeding, the call of God, was not the transient enthusiasm of the time-believer, but was the abiding grace of the Holy Spirit, leading and directing him to the end.

Just as little as from the life of Abraham is trial and tribulation wanting in the pilgrimage of the Christian to-day. His is not a path leading through pleasant groves and beside babbling brooks. True, times of enjoyment are not always denied him; but neither is he spared the trudging through the desert and the camping in the wilderness. The world in which he lives, has no sympathy for the calling that he has followed and rather throws every obstacle in the way to hinder him; like Abraham, he must groan under the inflictions that they of his own household, perhaps, they who are nearest and dearest to him after the flesh, as well as they who are brethren after the spirit, knowingly or unknowingly, lay upon him. Yea, it even comes to pass that God Himself must needs add to his tribulation by tempting and trying him. God's gracious presence is, perhaps, withdrawn, or His ways

are so dark and mysterious as to try to the utmost the confidence with which the believing heart clings to the promises that have been given. Abraham is called upon to prepare for the sacrificing of the beloved son of promise; Jacob laments for long years the supposed death of the child of his bosom; David had to flee from the city where the Lord had promised to establish his throne. It is true, much of this heartburning is due to the sinfulness that still remains even in the best of the children of Abraham and must be purged out by the fire of affliction. The murmurings of the heart must be checked as rebellion on the part of the old Adam against the good purposes and providences of God.

After such a life we may say of our departed brother in the words of our text: "Died in a good old age, an old man and full of years." His life did not measure the full span of the earthly pilgrimage accorded to Abraham—175 years; but the silver locks and furrowed brow give sign of many a day, many a year spent, we hope, in doing the Master's work. An old man, full of years, he died in a good old age—good in more senses than one: good, through the mercy of God, in its affording ample opportunity for finding the Saviour; good, for its many occasions to show forth the praises of Him who had called him out of darkness into His marvelous light; good, in its blessed communion with a gracious Redeemer; good, in its laying up treasures where moth cannot corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal away. Such a life is good since it is hallowed by faith in Him who

died to fulfill what we could not do and whose cloak of perfect righteousness makes all our doing acceptable in the sight of God.

When of such a man it is said, "he gave up the ghost," the words have more than their ordinary meaning. Does there not lie in them the idea of a peaceful giving over, a willing surrender of life? To a sinner alive to the enormity of his wrong-doing, there can be no hour more dreadful than the hour of his death. When the conscience is aroused, then the horrors of death are the very foretaste of the agonies of hell to the sinner that has no refuge from the impending doom. Yea, even the flesh of the Christian shrinks from the conflict that the hour of death may bring on; but the believer knows that death has not real terror for him. Its sting is gone; it is not the entrance into everlasting doom, but the bidding farewell to the trials and ills of this world and the entering into the mansions prepared above. Little wonder, then, that he gives up the ghost, willingly consigns his soul into the loving hands of his Father, and gladly lays himself down, after years of labor, for the refreshing sleep that will prepare him for the dawning of the resurrection morn.

In the meanwhile, he is gathered to his people. The body is laid to rest in the silent city of the dead, to sleep in slumber which no power of man can break. In all its frailty and imperfection, it is sunk into the earth, to come forth on the latter day by the almighty power of Him who will make it like unto His own glorious body. And the soul has left, for a time, the

tenement of flesh, and is safe in the hands of him from whom it came. Truly, such a one has been gathered to his people—to the number of those who await with gladness the coming of the day of life. Then with glorified body he will go forth to join in the glad song around the throne of the Lamb. Oh, happy all who thus, as children of Abraham, can be gathered to their people! We may weep that a loved one is taken from us, but we brush away those tears at the thought of the blessed end. Only, let us make sure that, when the summons comes to us, we, too, may be ready to be gathered unto the host of saints.

XXXVII.

I Will Lay Me Down in Peace.

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety. Psalm 4: 8.

In the figurative language of Scripture, "darkness" frequently means the night and inactivity of the grave. The day is the time of life, the time of activity and work. Within this time must be made all man's endeavors to work out his destiny; within this period is given him every opportunity to labor faithfully in the vineyard of the Lord and to be diligent about his Master's business. That time past, there is no promise of further chance to make good mistakes and seize neglected opportunities. When death has once put an end to this span of years—at best, three score years and ten—the night has come when, willingly or unwillingly, the laborer must lay aside his tools and betake himself to his abode.

The rest afforded by the night is sweet and refreshing to him who has labored with good will and might during the day. The sleep of the night of death should be grateful to the weary toiler in life's field. Only the Christian, however, can join in the evening hymn of the Psalmist when entering upon the rest of the grave:

"I WILL BOTH LAY ME DOWN IN PEACE, AND SLEEP: FOR THOU, LORD, ONLY MAKEST ME DWELL IN SAFETY."

Why is this so?

1) Because only the Christian lies down in peace.
2) Because he alone sleeps in safety.

I.

No matter how weary the body and racked the brain, the night brings no surcease from the pangs of an accusing conscience, and the darkness cannot hide from the search of the avenging Judge. Says the Psalmist: "All the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears." Ps. 6:6. The sinful heart of the natural man can never have true peace, for it must ever be in dread of the wrath that must smite it for its iniquity. True, there are thousands and millions that live on apparently well at ease. No foreboding ruffles the calm serenity of their way, and they exist without an indication of alarm at an impending doom. To man, they, too, appear to lie down in peace. Yet is there peace? To be standing upon the thin crust of earth that hides the mouth of the burn-

ing mountain, to be blind and not see the fiery tongues leaping from every crevice, to be deaf and not hear the rumbling of the threatening outbreak, to be dull and not feel the quaking of the earth beneath him—who would envy the foolish traveler his perilous footing? Would his be peace, despite his feeling of security? Had he but eyes to see, ears to hear, nerves to feel, he should tremble at the fate, threatening to overwhelm him. Destruction will break upon him though he sees it not. So the sinner may put out the light of the spiritual eye and deaden the voice of the warning conscience so as to see no danger and hear no voice bidding him beware. With Dives of old he may fare sumptuously every day and be clad in purple and fine linen, yea, in the hour of death, may lay himself down and leave the world with stoic indifference. All this may seem to be peace, but it is far from the peace given the sons of God. It is the veriest sham, deceiving the eye, to be harshly torn aside at the last moment by the awaking conscience or to be pierced to the inmost by the all searching eye of God. From such peace may we be delivered.

But there is a peace that passeth all understanding, a peace reserved for the children of God. Only he who is indeed conscious of his sin and shortcoming, and of the punishment that must follow in the wake of sin, but who knows at the same time, though his sins were as scarlet they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be white as wool, only he can really lay him down in peace and sleep. Not that life will be for him all sunshine; the world

will lose, for him, many of those attractions that seem to the worldling essential to the enjoying of life. He has many a cross to bear of which his unbelieving neighbor knows nothing. In fact, more than the ordinary share of trouble may fall to his lot, and it may well be, that the peace which is most surely his, is not so much a matter of experience and feeling, as a matter of faith. Yet though that faith be weak and faltering, it can and should command, even in the most troublous times, help, and peace of its God, by which the waves of the driving tempest can be stilled, even as of old, when the winds fell and the waves became calm at the voice of their Lord. And when the last great struggle is upon him, and Satan seeks to smite him with the terrors of death, his weak flesh may fear and falter, but even then he can lay him down in peace; for that which stilled the waters of life's stormy sea, can make for him in death a haven of rest. For even in the grave he sleeps in safety.

II.

What is, after all, the source of all unquietness? Is it not a lurking fear that men cannot dwell in safety: that plans will miscarry, hopes be found vain, in the end every fond ambition thwarted, and man driven by irresistible fate whither he would not go? He sees how changing and unstable is everything around him, so that there is nothing on which he can ground his hopes in the calm assurance that they can never be moved. Restless and uncertain, doomed to succumb to the fate that he despises or fears, even as a ship

tossed upon the billows—such is every one whose trust is rested upon anything that he finds in this world, within or without himself. Only he who can say with the Psalmist: "For thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety," has found a safe and unshaken foundation and a sure protection.

The Lord only, is his stay—not strength of arm, not power of mind, not might of gold, not influence and honor among men, not self-elected works and holiness that men admire. All these would avail him nothing in the dangers by which he is beset. As long as sin rules over him in its power and effects, man cannot dwell in safety. Then, his every thought, and word and deed, are bringing nearer the fate of eternal damnation, and every twitch of pain, every blow of misfortune are but the forerunners of that anguish and torment that will not know ceasing forever. Against the power and guilt of sin there can avail nothing but the blood of Him who was made sin for us and bore our stripes in His own body on the cross. They who share in this redemption, are saved from the might of sin. Through faith in this Saviour, they have become children of the heavenly Father whose watchful eye is ever upon them to keep them from all harm. In this life, all things must work together for their good. When the day is gone and the time for sleep has come it is, again, thou, O Lord, who makest them dwell in safety. Even then, though it appears as if death, at least, still has power over them, this is but seeming. The sting, the power of death is gone; the grave is not the entrance into torment; death has become but a sleep into which

the son of God can enter with the evening blessing: "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, makest me dwell in safety."

Ah, happy sleep! After the heat and toil of the day, how eagerly the body yearns for the cool evening and refreshing sleep! In the morning, weariness is gone and strength has come again. But how much more glorious, the sleep of death! From it all those, whose names are written in the book of life, go forth in glorified bodies, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, worthy to take their place with cherubim and seraphim around the throne of God, and to sing praises forever to the Lamb that was slain for the cleansing away of the sin of the world. Ah, well could the apostle say: "For me to die is gain."

May it be so with us. Let us with believing hearts lay ourselves down in peace and sleep, knowing that our Lord maketh us dwell in safety. Then it is well with us. If we are called to-day, if we are called to-morrow, we shall not dread the sleep that brings such a glad awakening.

XXXVIII.

Cast me not off in Time of Old Age.

Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth, Psalm 71:9.

Scripture, in more than one place, speaks of old age as worthy of much esteem and respect. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the holy man, and fear thy God" is a command given by the Lord through Moses in connection with some of the most important revelations of His will. It is, therefore, thoroughly Biblical for our catechism to include aged persons under the parents whom we are to honor, according to the Fourth Commandment. And when gray hairs are joined with wisdom, and are the signs of years well spent as a father and brother in the Church, of years full of victories over sin and Satan and of good wrought in the fear of God, then old age is worthy of double honor. We should deem it a high duty and privilege to cherish with fondest love those whose life's work is about done. Yea, more; by their example we should be urged on to trace our steps so, that ours, too, if the Lord will, may be an old age to merit the esteem of the young and to serve as an example to those over whom we shall be placed as fathers.

This time of life, the Psalmist views as fraught with ever increasing dangers, for he prays in our text: "Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth." This prayer, no doubt, our beloved father in the Lord uttered many a time

when the weight of years was pressing upon him, and he saw the snares that Satan was laying for him to cause his feet to stumble even at the brink of the grave. We have every reason to believe that this prayer was answered and that our beloved one was preserved to the very end, so that in him we may see the blessed efficacy of this prayer:

CAST ME NOT OFF IN OLD AGE.

Let us seize the opportunity given us to-day to learn

1) What such a prayer means.
2) How it will be answered.

I.

Though strength in the Spirit and in faith is not necessarily joined with robustness of body and vigor of mind, it cannot be denied that that period of life in which the forces of the body begin to fail and the powers of the mind to grow sluggish, has its peculiar and dangerous temptations. While the possession of unimpaired vigor of body and mind, has its own dangers for the spiritual life, it is but natural for man to pray for special grace and for special strength to overcome temptation during the infirmities of advanced years coming upon him without sad and pensive feelings. Who, if it were left to his own choice, would wish to be an old man, to enter that stage of life in which the forerunners of death, infirmities and sickness of all kinds, are wont to be more numerous and more importunate?

That pain of body has its reflex action upon the tone and state of the soul, no one with the least experience will think of denying. However, not only experience but also Holy Writ proves that Satan is quick to seize times of suffering for the laying of his own snares. When in affliction, Job was counseled by false friends to curse God and die. Lot, and Asa and Solomon were entrapped by the foe when old age came upon them. Discontent with one's lot, murmuring against the doings of God, looking to the things of this world for solace and comfort has often disgraced the old age of such as manfully withstood the temptations of youth.

It is often during this period of life that the ties by which a man is bound to earth, instead of moldering away and leaving him free, as it were, to fly to a better world, become stronger and more binding. The knowledge that all these things, the use and enjoyment of which is not forbidden the Christian, will soon have to be laid aside, gives them an attraction, a drawing and binding power, that they did not before exert. Bonds of relationship become more firmly knit: an old man will frequently watch with greatest anxiousness, the development of a beloved grandchild. The love of money and possession grows stronger, so that, in consequence, instead of welcoming the messenger of death, age seeks to evade him, and by keeping the eyes fixed on this nether world, loses sight of the heaven above to which our longing gaze should be directed.

Of these dangers threatening him in the path nearest the grave, the Psalmist knew and, therefore,

prays in the words of our text: "Cast me not off in time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth." Do not grow weary of my waywardness and foolish clinging to things here below; do not, at last, give me over into the power of a foe whose snares are entrapping my feet.

II.

What lesson have these words for even the young? To be able to pray as the Psalmist does we must make sure that the Lord is with us long before old age comes upon us; we must make sure that the Lord is with us now and will abide. He wants to be with us and help us not only at certain periods in our lives; at all times and in all seasons He would be our God. Yea, even more: the Lord has a right to demand that our whole service be consecrated to Him. We are His, His handiwork, and all that we have is but the outpouring of His bounty. It is not for us to decide how many years of our lives shall be devoted to the business of this world, without regard for the requirements of God's Law, and then, after our strength is spent, make up our minds to return to our Father as the prodigal son and spend the evening of life in making our peace with God. Alas, how many that had thus mapped out their course, found out too late how fatal had been their miscalculation. The years that they had counted upon so confidently were not given them, and long before the day of life had reached its evening, they were hurried away, perhaps even suddenly and without warning! To-day, to-mor-

row may be the time when one or more of us will be summoned hence to stand account before our Judge. Woe, woe to him who is thus carried off before he has found his God and his Redeemer! Now, now, is the accepted time, oh! why will you tarry? To-day, if you hear the voice of the Spirit, harden not your hearts, for it is the call of God, bidding you to take heed.

When He, the Spirit, has done His work upon the heart, you must feel that even if we could spend every moment of our life in the service of our God, if our every breath could sound forth His praise, we had not begun to pay the debt of gratitude we owe Him. Eternity will be none too long to sing the wonders of His love towards us. To the natural man, the prospects offered by Christian life are not such as to invite him to do as the Saviour bids: "Take up thy cross and follow me." But when the blind eyes are opened, then we can see that though we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of heaven, there is a peace and a glory even in the direst tribulation that makes His yoke easy and His burden light. Then will we pray with the Psalmist, and when the evening of life comes with its weakness, the Lord will not forsake.

That must be a glorious sunset of life, when the angels of God stand guard to warn off every danger! Blessed is he who thus closes his weary eyes and falls asleep in the arms of his Saviour. May ours be such an end.

XXXIX.

With His Stripes are we Healed.

With his stripes are we healed. Isa. 53: 5.

"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified." The subject of all Christian preaching and the essence of all Christian knowledge is Jesus Christ crucified. Jesus Christ occupies the Christian's heart and mind. The happiness of our lives we owe to Him who was crucified for us, and in the day of trouble we hasten to place ourselves under the cross. To-day, as always, but particularly to-day, beloved mourners, as your souls are uttering grievous lamentations and your hearts are bleeding from the cruel wounds inflicted by the hard hand of death, look up to your bleeding, dying Saviour. I am determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. For I know that He alone, and He surely, can heal you to-day. For

WITH HIS STRIPES ARE WE HEALED.

He heals the wounds
1) Of sin,
2) Of affliction, and
3) Of death.

I.

Behold your crucified Lord! His sorrow and grief! Stricken by men, smitten by God! His body and soul full of wounds and bruises and stripes! And with His stripes we are healed.

Sin has wounded all men. They were conceived in sin, they daily commit sin. It is a fatal wound and causes agonizing pain. He who is dead in sins feels little of it, but he will yet feel it and know it. When the conscience feels the wound of sin, it roars: "Thine arrows stick fast in me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger." The wound of sin smarts and burns as with the fire of the infernal lake.

Unless this wound be healed, no word of comfort may be spoken on earth; no word of comfort would be heeded by the wounded one. But with His stripes are we healed. For "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." Our sins were laid on Him and their poison was poured out in His stripes. Smitten by the law, He gained a perfect righteousness for us; wounded by His Father's wrath, He reconciled Him to us; the stripes of Him who was bruised for our iniquities proclaim the forgiveness of sin. These stripes yield the balm which heals the wound of sin. When a wound is healed, it has disappeared, and our sin is taken away by the blood of Jesus. As soon as we put our trust in the stripes of Jesus as inflicted on Him for our sin the accusing voice is hushed; we stand before God as just men; we behold His gracious countenance.

We need at all times the certain knowledge that our sins are forgiven and you need it to-day. Let not Satan re-open the wound by causing you to doubt in your affliction the grace of God and your salvation by

Jesus. If He, indeed, turned from you now, you were lost. Stand firm and say: "With His stripes we are healed." God cannot turn from those whose sins are forgiven. The bliss resulting from this knowledge will uphold you in the present distress. Do you believe that with the stripes of Jesus you are healed from sin? Then you may say: "I am sorely afflicted, but bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name: who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases."

So a Christian rejoices even in sore affliction. But behold, the stripes of Jesus, yielding forgiveness of sin, thereby also heal the wound of affliction.

II.

In affliction the unbeliever cannot drown the voice: "The Lord has begun to punish my sin and woe is me, when the full measure of stripes is meted out." It is not the loss itself which pains so much; but sin is the poison, which makes the wound so sore and festering. Affliction to him is a rod in the hand of an angry Lord which cuts to the quick.

But with His stripes are we healed. His stripes inflicted for our sin and inflamed with the fever of the sense of the Lord's displeasure, assure us that God cannot be punishing us for our sins, for the vials of his wrath have been emptied on Jesus. They take from our stripes the painful sting. They transform them into a father's chastisement, which warns us: Cleave not unto any earthly thing; admonishes us:

Be prepared for your death; invites us: Come to my arms and rest in my love. God loves us dearly, for did He not smite His dear Son for our sakes? The stripes of Jesus thus yield the soothing balm of the knowledge of our Father's love. When we know that God is not angry at us, but in His great love is correcting us, and ever ready to caress us, the wound of affliction must heal; and that the stripes of Jesus tell us.

In the life of our departed sister there was much labor and sorrow. She suffered much in her last long illness. Her enforced absence from public worship and her inability to minister to her beloved ones weighed heavily upon her. It was a heavy cross, but it did not wound her. Confident that Jesus had borne her affliction, she trusted that her Father was not afflicting her in wrath, and Jesus' love soothed her in those days of trouble.

God has suffered a great affliction to fall upon you now. Are your hearts wounded? Apply the healing blood of Jesus Christ. Thank God that this iron has not entered into your souls: the fear that God has smitten you in His sore displeasure. It must be an unspeakable comfort to you to know that the Lord chasteneth those whom He loveth, that He is now waiting for you to cast yourselves in your loneliness upon Him. Do so that you shall hear the sweet words: Why weepest thou? I am with thee! And with me is she who was taken from you in death. She is not dead, but liveth!

With His stripes the wound of death is healed.

III.

This is the fatal wound: death itself. The natural man is spiritually dead, and the temporal death hurls him into the horrors of eternal death.

But with His stripes are we healed. Jesus, bearing our sins, taketh away the penalty of sin, death. When death violently smote Him, it forfeited its power over us. Hearing the vow of Christ: "O death, I will be thy plagues, O grave, I will be thy destruction," we shout in faith: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" We are healed from the dread disease of death, which finally assumes the virulent form of damnation, by the death of Him who suffered for us the agonies on the cross. Transfusion of blood may save in a hopeless case: the blood of Jesus, appropriated by faith, performs this miracle: death, damnation, must yield its prey, spiritually alive we look forward to eternal life. Death cannot destroy us: we need not fear even temporal death, for beyond it there is life. Will it not wound and hurt? Aye, it is the wondrous operation by means of which, by one cut, though we wince under it, our living Physician restores us to perfect health.

We thank God to-day that our dear mother has been kept in the faith in which she lived unto her end; that in the wounds of Jesus she calmly fell asleep; that dying she is now fully healed with His stripes.

The stripes of Jesus, upholding your faith, will be your safeguard against the deadly breath of death, hopeless sorrow. The stripes of Jesus have gained for you the life eternal, and as I trust that your hope

is based on the death of your Saviour, this hope, this blessed prospect of once seeing God as He is and seeing again your dear wife and mother as she now is, will comfort you in your sorrow. Your hearts are now heavy and sick unto death: there is life in the stripes of Jesus! The stripes of Jesus give righteousness for sin, joy for sorrow, life for death. And in that dread hour of death, lest we be undone by the fear of death and eternal punishment for our sins, let us look to Jesus Christ crucified and cry to Him:

"Be thou my consolation
And shield when I must die.
Let me behold Thy passion,
When my last hour draws nigh,
My dim eyes then shall see Thee,
Upon Thy cross shall dwell,
My heart by faith enfold Thee—
Who dieth thus, dies well." Amen.

XL.

The Kindly Offices of the Three Cardinal Christian Virtues at the Burial of Christians.

Now there abideth faith, hope, charity, these three: but the greatest of these is charity. 1 Cor. 13: 13.

A strange succession of events has brought me to this place twice within the brief space of two years on an errand of comfort to your pastor. We wept here two years ago at the bier of the pastor's wife,

and said in humble faith: "Thy will be done." We have come here to-day to weep at the bier of the pastor's only child. The parsonage is now stripped of the last earthly element of joy to its lone occupant, who will return to it weary and worn. The last years have been marked for him by such losses as to cause him to ask: "What have I yet remaining of any value in this life?"

In the chapter from which our text has been taken, St. Paul speaks of the transition to which all things earthly are subject. There are in this world great and sad failures; in fact, nothing is stable. The highest accomplishments of the human mind end in ruin: prophecies fail, tongues cease, knowledge vanishes away. Man himself is at any moment in his life but the product of changes in the past. He grows into mature manhood at the sacrifice of the delights of his early days. The wisdom and repose of mind which characterize his old age is bought at the price of many a painful experience and loss during his years of vigor. During these critical moments, when our losses are keenly felt, and the issues of the future are still unrevealed, the heart cries out in anguish: "What is there left for me in this life to live and labor for?"

Out of such gloom the apostle points a way, when he says: "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known; " and then goes on to say: "And now abideth," etc. Plainly, then, our text admits of an application, such as shall bring comfort to our heart in the hour of painful losses. There

are great treasures remaining for the Christian even after he has made an Abraham's offering to the Lord of his dearest earthly treasure.

Allow me to speak to you, accordingly, of

THE KINDLY OFFICES OF THE THREE CARDINAL CHRISTIAN VIRTUES AT THE BURIAL OF CHRISTIANS:

1) The office of faith;
2) The office of hope;
3) The office of charity, or love.

I.

It is of the essence of faith to be reassured and confiding even when there seems to be no reason for such trustfulness. That this world sprang forth out of chaos, and that every event within it, from the darkening of the sun's disk in an eclipse to the fading of a primrose by the wayside, is in accordance with a will and law higher than ours, is a matter of faith. We accept the rulings of Providence throughout the universe, and defend their wise and good design against the doubting skeptic, whose terrible god is the idol of chance. With the Christian there is no chance. Faith forbids such a thought.

That a world full of sinners and justly cursed by a righteous God had an atonement prepared by the same God, who even was at such pains in their behalf as to give over His only begotten Son into death in order that sinners might live—that is a matter of faith. We accept this wonderful ruling of Mercy in our case, and defend its validity even in the shadow of death. With Christians a penitent sinner's death is not a death.

Faith compels them to view the hour of earthly departure as the Christian martyrs viewed it two thousand years ago, viz.: the birth-hour of a new life, a life eternal.

That a human heart, naturally treacherous and incurably wicked, can be so reformed by God, as to love what is formerly hated and to hate what is formerly loved—that is a matter of faith. We accept this ruling of Grace, and verify it in our own lives, which are what they are by this regenerating, renewing grace. With Christians nothing is impossible; they can do all things in the power of Christ, hope all things, bear all things.

Faith yields you its kindly office, dear father, in this hour of sadness. It points out to you that the frightful work of death which you view in this coffin is really the work of Providence. It reminds you that this child of yours is embraced in the eternal counsels of Divine Mercy. It invites you to behold a child of God which has just been ushered from sanctification into glorification. Would you not contradict the Spirit in your own heart, if you refused to say: "It is the Lord: He hath done what hath seemed good unto Him?"

Have you not often observed, while your child was still living, that the grace of God was busy about her in a peculiar manner? How sensitive was she of any wrong in thought or action! How humble and devoted to her Saviour! She had made the foot of her Redeemer's cross the favorite place to which she would retire in her frequent meditations. And how gentle and loving she was toward all! There was no guile

in her heart and no malice on her lips. Her memory will be ever green among us as that of a child of grace, loving the Redeemer and beloved by Him. Her death is but another of those mysterious acts of grace which you have so often observed with silent wonder and gratitude. You believed then that the Lord was with your child, and you will also believe now that her lines are fallen in pleasant places. Now abideth faith: from this coffin you shall go forth again into this world of sinners, and proclaim with renewed conviction that there is a life after this life, and that God is good, though we momentarily understand Him not. Far from leaving you nothing on earth to live for, God has all the more fitted you for most efficient service in his Church by your faith-trying experiences of the last two years.

II.

With Christian faith there is always mingled a certain joyful expectation, which calms their griefs, and gilds their tribulations with a marvelous beauty, like the cloud-reefs on which the sunlight sleeps on a midsummer evening, after the storm has spent its force. Though the outer face of things looks dark and threatening, there is light beyond.

Faith grasps truths which no intellect holds, but hope lays hold of blessings. Hope looks ahead for good results to spring from present conditions.

All human life is stimulated by hope: its drudgery were unbearable, did not the Angel of Hope lend its aid to the plodding toilers. But human hopes are deceptive; they often come to nought before they are

fully conceived. There is, however, a hope which perisheth not. St. Paul speaks of some who sorrow as those who have no hope. Death is, with them, the final catastrophe, which leaves but an aching void behind. Not in this manner would Paul have those sorrow, to whom he speaks. They may shed tears and express their grief, but they should do so with hope. The Christian cannot view, or speak of, the death of a beloved one as a loss, hardly as a privation. He does not leave him at the grave, never to meet with him again. He looks forward to a reunion. This hope cannot fail; for it has affixed to it the seal of Jesus' own word, who has said: "The hour cometh when those that are asleep in the graves shall rise."

To that hour you are now directed, dear friend, to look forward. You shall yet be privileged, if you remain faithful, to take your child's hand and, with her and her sainted mother, stand before the Lord, and praise Him, who has loved both her and you with a love beyond all telling.

Thus also hope yields you its kindly office to-day. Hope will go out with us to God's Acre and lay a wreath of Forget-me-nots,—all the promises of our dear Lord—upon your child's grave, to rouse your faltering spirit whenever you visit it. Remember, where she is, you expect to be, and thither you desire to lead with you many sinners saved.

III.

Concluding the apostle says: "But the greatest of these is love;" the word charity in this chapter, namely,

means love. The apostle has depicted this love in the preceding verses of this chapter, and has given prominence particularly to one of love's traits, that of unselfishness. Love never seeks its own interests, never peevishly desires the accomplishment of its own wishes, but lives only for the joy and cheer and happiness of others. It is willing self-surrender and self-denial for the sake of another. And therein lies its superior greatness. Such love is God-like. So God loved the world, —which hated Him—that He gave His only Son that all who believed in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. This love involved a sacrifice on God's part: Scripture speaks of it thus: "God spared not His own son."

The proper training, then, for just this virtue, which no man possesses by nature, and only the beginning of which Christians possess by grace,—the proper training, I say, for love is by means of sacrifices. We love in proportion as we are willing to give up. Our surrenders are steps forward in the school of love.

Now God loves at times what we love. We love our children; so does God. Again, our children love what we love; we love Christ, so do our children. God declares in His Word: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." And Christians repeat the wish of the apostle: "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ." Now here is a dilemma which only love can solve. Shall God and our child give up their wish in our interest, or shall we give up our wish for the sake of Christ and our child? Without a moment's

hesitation a true Christian's heart will say: "Nay, let Christ, let my child, have their wish; I yield!"

Love, then, my dear friend, will teach you to say in this hour of grief: "Lord, gladly do I commit to Thy hands what Thou lovest so much better than I. Heavenly Father, Thou hast given Thine only Son that I and my child might be saved, and thereby hast taught me to love Thee and to do as Thou has done." Love will also give you strength to take leave of your child's earthly remains, and to say contentedly: "My dear child, though my heart is bleeding, yet for thy sake I shall be satisfied; though I go back to silence and solitude, yet I will rejoice in thy happiness. Farewell! I had intended you for the cheer of my advancing years, but God has picked you for a jewel in the Redeemer's crown. I love thee greatly, but because I love thee so, I will gladly yield thee to the Lord, and say: It is all well; God be praised." Amen.

XLI.

The Inheritance of the Saints in Light.

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. Col. 1: 9, 10.

The solemn moments when Christians linger around the remains of a dear sister in the faith are moments when heaven and earth seem to meet. All the thoughts of a Christian funeral assembly center around heavenly

themes: heaven, Jesus the exalted, glory. The body of the departed, as it were, forms a connection between the saints below and the saints above. They are standing on both sides of the river of death. From hither side songs of victory are chanted, because another soul redeemed by Jesus has conquered the last of foes; and these songs wake a conjubilant echo on yonder bank, where the saints made perfect welcome the new arrived comrade, co-heir of grace with them, to his rest and reward. The church triumphant and the church militant hold glad reunions at the coffins and graces of believers, and emphasize the confession of "One Lord, One faith, One baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." Herein lies a great portion of the value of a public Christian funeral to those who take part in it and to those in whose honor such a funeral service is being conducted: it is a parting confession, so to speak, both on the part of the departed and of the survivors, of that unity of faith which has existed among them, and which even death cannot destroy.

Such an opportunity is vouchsafed us to-day. Our esteemed and beloved sister adds to the many blessings which the Lord has through her bestowed on our congregation also this final blessing, that she puts us into connection with heaven while we consider her departure. She was one of those natures in whom the future life is foreshadowed already here. Refined by grace she was living away from the world in a heavenward direction. Her speech and her thoughts were of heaven; her con-

versation was in heaven, as she now actually is according to her present mode of existence in heaven. Such Christians we also are, or can be; for God hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, as Paul declared concerning himself and the believing Colossians, while they were still in the flesh. As a tribute to the memory of our departed sister, in whom divine grace has been so signally glorified, and for our own comfort, let me now speak to you of:

THE INHERITANCE OF THE SAINTS IN LIGHT

showing

1) What it is, and

2) How it is obtained.

I.

Paul here prays for the Colossians that they might be filled with the knowledge of God to walk worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in good works and strengthened with His might unto patience in suffering, and then he exhorts them to "give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." What is the inheritance of the saints in light? This becomes clear to the mind if we know who the saints in light are. Of the New Jerusalem, the city of the blessed, St. John, Rev. 21, writes: "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God

did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it." Those are the saints in light who walk in the light of the New Jerusalem, and the dwelling in that city and the walking in the light thereof is the inheritance of the saints in light. The inheritance of the saints in light is the same as everlasting salvation; for Christ also pronounces it an inheritance, saying unto those on His right hand: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The inheritance of the saints in light is the joy, bliss, happiness prepared in heaven, where the perfected saints see the Lamb, that was slain, face to face and rejoice in the light of His countenance.

But to construe this text as referring only and alone to the perfected saints in heaven would be greatly misconstruing it. Saints in light are also those who are yet living on earth, but who have the light of life in them, who are enlightened with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, who by the light of the Gospel of Christ see their way clear to the everlasting kingdom of light above; for in the 12th chapter of John the Lord says: "Yet a little while is the light with you. While ye have light believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." Christ is the light and those believing on Him are the children of light, and the children of light are none other than the saints in light; for to the Corinthians Paul writes: "The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." The inheritance of the saints in light, therefore, are the spiritual, heavenly gifts

which the believers possess; such as the in-dwelling of Christ in the heart through faith; spiritual eyes to see spiritual things spiritually; the hope of eternal life, and the like. The inheritance of the saints in heaven and the saints on earth is in fact one and the same; for their light and joy is Christ and our light and joy is Christ. The difference is only this: Those who have preceded us to heaven have come into the full enjoyment of the inheritance, we possess it through faith and rejoice over it in hope. Of this the apostle Peter speaks with beautiful and comforting words when he writes: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." He says, God has begotten us unto the inheritance reserved in heaven, we are already made heirs of it, it is already ours, already given us, only we do not yet see it, we believe it and hope, that is, do not doubt that we will come to see it. Therefore the apostle here uses the past tense, saying: "The Father hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." To refer the words only to the future, that we will be partakers, would be an unwarrantable construction. The inheritance is Christ and His merits. The saints in heaven have Christ seeing Him, we have Christ believing on Him; it is one and the same inheritance, wherefore the poet rightly says:

The saints on earth and those above
But one communion make;
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

II.

Knowing what the inheritance is, we must also consider, How is it obtained? Concerning this the apostle in the first place says: "The Father hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance." So the inheritance is obtained in this way that God makes us meet to be partakers thereof. As man is by nature, he is not meet for the inheritance of God; he must, therefore, first be made meet, and what shall a man do to make himself meet? Ah, the Ethiopian cannot change the color of his skin. We cannot make one hair white or black, and if we cannot even do this, it is certainly blindness to think we might so change our heart and nature as to make ourselves meet for the inheritance of saints. The apostle does not say: We have made ourselves meet, he says: "The Father hath made us meet." God must make us meet or we remain unmeet.

How the Father makes us meet the apostle states in the following words: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." In this way God makes man meet for the inheritance of the saints in light by delivering him from the power of darkness and bringing him into the kingdom of His Son. This darkness is sin with all its attendant evils and conse-

quences. This is the first that God does to make us meet to be His heirs, He delivers us from sin. Yet Paul does not simply say: Who hath delivered us from darkness, he says: "From the power of darkness." Sin is a power ruling over man. Not only is Satan, the king of darkness, a powerful prince, sin itself is a power in man. It possesses the sense, appetites, inclinations, so that they hate the light and crave what must dread the light. Sin corrupts the reason so that it judges falsely in divine things; it perverts the will, so that man does not want the light, but loves the darkness in which he is. So the natural man is in the power of darkness; it environs him on all sides like a net from which he cannot escape, and which we cannot shake off. The natural man may, indeed, by his own reason and strength come to the conclusion to quit serving sin and to set out on the way to heaven, but can he in this way extricate himself from the power of darkness? Indeed not; for the darkness in his reason will cause him to judge falsely of the way to heaven and will lead him in a way which cannot take him there; and though he labor ever so hard, he is yet in the power of darkness as well as before. You may train a nightbird as much as you please, you can never make it hate the darkness and love the sunlight, because you cannot change its nature. The almighty God alone can do this. The almighty God alone can change man born under the power of sin, and make him a hater of sin and error and a lover of that which is truly pleasing to God, and this the almighty God does do. He breaks and

hinders the will of the devil, the world and the flesh and makes him who loved the darkness and hated the light to hate the darkness and to love the light. God does, indeed, in this life not so deliver from darkness that nothing of darkness is left in man, but He delivers from the power of darkness so that the Christian loving the light and walking therein, is no more controlled by the darkness.

With the deliverance from the power of darkness St. Paul closely connects the entering into the kingdom of light: "And hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son." Christ is the light which the Father has sent into the world; and His kingdom is the kingdom of light. Into this kingdom of light the Father translates men, drawing them to the Son, creating in their hearts the true knowledge of Christ and kindling trust in and love to Christ. This mighty change Paul describes in these words: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." The Jews represent the self-righteous who, thinking Christ could help them nothing, look to their own works for righteousness; the Greeks represent the worldly-minded who care nothing for Christ and His salvation and look only to the treasures and pleasures of this life. But when the Father delivers from darkness and translates into the kingdom of His Son, those who before thought Christ could help them nothing, now see that in Him alone is the power to save: and those who before

thought it wisdom to seek after earthly things, now see that adhering to Christ is alone true wisdom. So God makes men "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," by delivering them from the power of darkness and translating them into the kingdom of His dear Son; for those who are in the kingdom of the Son, are certainly also meet to inherit with the Son.

Here you might perhaps ask: How does God bring about this wonderful thing of making a free child of light out of a slave of darkness? This question may be asked from two different motives. If you want the mysterious workings of God in newcreating the heart of man explained, I must candidly confess that I cannot do it. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." But the way in or the means through which God effects this change, our text indicates by the word "inheritance." An inheritance is obtained by bequest. The inheritance of the saints in light God has bequeathed unto us, and the instruments through which He confers the right and title thereto, are the Word and the Sacraments. In Baptism God adopts men as His children and heirs, and through the Gospel He calls men unto this inheritance and by His calling draws them unto His Son.

Therefore, Fellow Christians, I am bold to apply the little word "us" which Paul here uses of himself and the Colossians, also to you and to me and to the departed, and to say: The Father has made us

who are here gathered together in His name, meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. I am bold to make this application and have no fear of making a wrong application, although well aware that there are despisers at all places and hypocrites in all churches. But I say we, as many of us as do not despise our Baptism and do not turn a deaf ear to the Gospel, we who love this heavenly light, even we are partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; for the Scripture saith: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Amen.

XLII.

The Life of a Christian a Fight for a Crown.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearance. 2 Tim. 4: 7, 8.

It is confident language which the aged apostle uses in this text. Some say it is a proud language. Proud? Never. For, we must bear in mind that the speaker is the same man who confessed: "By the grace of God I am what I am;" the same man who avowed this intention: "Most gladly will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Moreover, if we examine the fight and the course of which St. Paul is thought to boast in this text, we shall at once perceive how vain the charge is. Prison and stripes, hunger and nakedness, scorn and hatred had marked the apostle's course. He had been made the offscouring of the world, he had been cast before wild animals; his name had become travestied, his character pilloried; he says that he had become a fool to men. If, then, his present language bespeaks pride, it is, at least, an unearthly pride, something for which we should find a better name.

These words were written to a young minister by the name of Timothy, whose pattern St. Paul strove to be. Let those who think the language of St. Paul in our text proud, read the entire Epistle in which they occur, and they will find that Paul inculcates in it the very opposite of pride.

It becomes my duty to-day to speak to you from these words by the express wish of our departed sister. She selected this text for her funeral, and I have promised her to preach from it. What a striking commentary on this text the wish of the departed is! Our humble, modest, quiet mother K., whom we all have known and loved for her simple, guileless, unassuming ways, whose every thought recoiled from pride, whose tearful confessions of her utter worthlessness, I must confess it, have often covered me with shame in my own eyes, why should just she select this text? Do we not all feel instinctively that if this pearl of our congregation could choose a text like this, there must be in it something far different from pride? Yes, indeed;

and now may Christ assist me with His Holy Spirit to the end that I may bring out for your instruction and comfort the true meaning of this wonderful text. I wish to show you that

THE LIFE OF A CHRISTIAN IS A FIGHT FOR A CROWN.

And to describe

1) The fight.
2) The crown.

I.

The first records of Paul found in the Scriptures show him engaged in a stubborn fight and running a desperate course. He had set himself the mad task of uprooting the church of Christ. He stood by when the blood of the first Christian martyr, Stephen, was spilt. He traveled great distances to vex the followers of Christ. Was this the fight, was this the course of which he speaks in our text? No, all this came to a sudden stop before the gates of Damascus, when the Lord interfered with the bigoted zeal of the apostle, and told him: "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." Then there came a change over Paul so unparalleled that the world could not believe its ears, when it heard the same Paul defend the very doctrines which he had started to annihilate. Then began the fight, then the race was entered of which our text speaks.

And first, it was a fight against his own flesh and blood. An honest man does not easily give up a conviction which has been instilled in him with his moth-

er's milk. In the seclusion of his room at Damascus, shut out from the light of day, by the mighty hand of Jesus, Paul fought his great battle. Jesus, the Saviour of poor sinners, whose Gospel he had regarded as false, stood pitted in his heart against all that was dear to him. He had to disbelieve all that he had hitherto cherished. He had to acknowledge that all his piety and zeal for the church of the Pharisees was not only as filthy rags, but was a direct blasphemy in God's sight and a lie in the sight of his own aroused conscience. He had to renounce his friends and co-religionists; he had to abjure the great synagogue; he had to forsake father and mother, and start out upon a life the issues of which he could not foresee. He came out of this battle victorious; he made it henceforth his parole of honor not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. He started upon the race near the goal of which we behold him in our text; for he says, he has finished the course. His life since the day of his conversion was a life of self-abnegation. He lived no longer unto himself, but unto His Lord Jesus Christ. Flesh and blood were no longer consulted by him.

But the battle in which he had become engaged assumed more formidable dimensions. His old friends, who had applauded his efforts against Christ, as vigorously denounced his efforts for Christ. He was slandered and reviled; his enemies met him with force and cunning; they frustrated his ministration wherever they could; they raised up persecutors for him;

they hounded him well nigh to death. For nearly twenty-five years the biography of the apostle is one marvelous record of relentless persecution.

Nor was this all. God also laid on the chastising rod, suffering Satan's angel to buffet the apostle, and leading him, as it were, up to the brink of despair by refusing the apostle's prayer for deliverance.

Truly, it had been a marvelous fight, a matchless race! It was not a man's fight, not a man's race. The man Paul, who exclaimed: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" should have gone down after the first blow, he could not have run two paces without losing his breath. But God upbore him in this strife, and stablished his faltering knees. It was Jesus' fight in and through His chosen servant; Jesus' race in His elect vessel. And with this understanding the apostle on the eve after the fierce battle could gratefully exclaim: "I have fought the fight."

In this sense mother K. wishes to be understood by us in the selection of her funeral text. Let us briefly review the prominent points in her life, and note the battles which she has had to fight, etc., etc.

All this, beloved, you know far better than I, for she has been with you for more than thirty years, and I have known her only a few years. What good things I have been enabled to say of her at this sacred place, I have from your own lips, for she has talked to me in a different strain about herself. I feel that I am only paying a debt of love which this congregation owes to the dear departed in according to her the honor

due a child of grace, a bearer of many crosses for Jesus' sake, and in proclaiming in this hour of her victory and our sorrow: "She has fought a good fight; she has run her race well." May God grant unto us many who fight and run as sincerely.

II.

The thoughts of the apostle in our text now rise heavenward, away from his sorrows and toils, away from the accusations of his own heart and the jibes of his enemies, away from all toil and worry. He forgets the painful past and the dark present; he stretches forward to the bright future. He has lost all for Christ's sake; but one thing remains safe: "There is laid up for me," he says, "a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day." That crown is "laid up" for him: he has not put it there; it was there before he went into the battle, before he entered the race. It was laid up for him, lest he should lose it. When he receives it, it will be with overflowing thanks to Him who kept that crown for him, and who gives it to him from His pure mercy, without any merit in Paul. That crown is the life eternal, with its unfading glory and undying bliss. The chosen of the Lord gather around the throne of the Lamb after the strife is over, each of them a hero and a conqueror in battles with Satan, world and flesh. They sing the songs of the blest; their night of weeping is changed into a morn of song. Sorrow and pain are gone. Their happiness is complete and confirmed.

I know of no sweeter comfort, my dear friends, in this hour of your bereavement, than this which your mother has pointed out to you in her funeral text. She desires to say to you: "Weep not; behold my exceeding great reward. If you love me, would you begrudge me this? I am with my Saviour; my cross is taken from me; my groans have changed into hallelujahs; my tears have been dried; my soul has found the peace which passeth all understanding."

But the tender thoughtfulness of your mother appears in still another point, when you consider the last words of our text. Of the crown which awaits him St. Paul says not only that the Lord will give it to him, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Paul was not jealous of his reward of grace; he wished to share heaven with many sinners redeemed like him. So far from being proud, he really desires nothing beyond what we all hope and pray to receive, when our fight is fought and our race run. Your mother is one of those of whom Paul spoke in this text, and she desires to have you included among those who love the Lord's appearing. What a delicate, feeling reminder to you to remain faithful, to take up your cross, to run your appointed race, to fight your battles! Do not forget the great reunion that shall be, etc.

I cannot close without an earnest word of adomnition to you, beloved members of ———— congregation. Within a fortnight we have laid to rest three of our oldest and best members. The ranks of those whose counsel was prized in the affairs of our congregation are being thinned. Greater responsibilities are

now daily falling upon the rising generation. God takes from us our pillars; will he also give us new members, as scrupulous in their conduct as the old? Yes, He will; His Word and grace shall never fail this congregation, and with it shall come every necessary gift for the upbuilding of the kingdom of His Son among us. However, let us be faithful to our great trust; let us hold fast without wavering the profession of our faith; let us fight a good fight; let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Meanwhile we commend ourselves to the mercy of our Lord who died for us, and who promises us after a brief probation a crown of glory. Amen.

XLIII.

The Dying Christian's Song of Triumph.

I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me alone, but unto all them also that love his appearance. 2 Tim. 4: 7, 8.

In Christ beloved mourners:—We are sometimes called upon to pronounce funeral orations on the departure of such people as turn to the Lord in their last fleeting hours and minutes after a long life of sin and unbelief. The grace of God snatches them, so to say, as live brands from the burning. And as there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, and repenteth on his death-bed, even so the church of God magnifies the mercy of God in such instances, and gives humble thanks to the infinite goodness of the

Most High. But in such cases we cannot speak words of praise on the life of the departed, but must ask our people to take a warning and not postpone their preparation for death until death has almost veiled their reason and senses and sealed their lips. To those dying in the manner just mentioned we cannot apply the words just read: "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

The instance of mortality by which we have been called hither to-day, is not of such a nature. Our father and brother turned, to our knowledge, not unto the Lord Jesus on his death-bed, but in his infancy.—He was, if our information is correct, one of the rare instances of men that have lived a life of faith and godliness from the very baptismal font. From the day on which he was baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, he continued for almost seventy-two years in the grace of God. To such men we may apply at their departure from this life the triumphant song of St. Paul, "I have finished my course." In praise, then, of the unbounded mercies of God, and in honor of our deceased father and brother, let us meditate in this solemn hour on

THE DYING CHRISTIAN'S SONG OF TRIUMPH AFTER A LONG LIFE OF FAITH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.

First Stanza—I have finished my course.

Second Stanza—I have kept the faith.

Third Stanza—Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.

I.

The course of life which God wills men to finish, is to engage in a useful occupation to benefit their fellowmen. Such was the life of St. Paul in an eminent sense. His whole life, after his conversion into Christ, was spent in that glorious calling of winning men over from the kingdom of darkness into the realm of spiritual life and light. As an ambassador of Jesus Christ, he spent his life in missionary efforts among the Gentiles. No contempt, no hatred, no persecution, no affliction whatever could prevail upon him to neglect this calling, and in the face of a martyr's death he exclaimed, "I have finished my course," I have accomplished, through the grace and power of God, the work of my life, to preach the Gospel among the Gentiles.

Such, also, though in the humbler sphere of another calling, was the life of our brother, whose demise has caused us to deck ourselves with the robes of mourning. Having been born in the year 1811, in Oelbronn, Wurtemberg, and soon thereafter consecrated to the Triune God in holy baptism, he received with his brothers and sisters, a good Christian school education on the part of his parents. After confirmation, he prepared himself, by an apprenticeship of several years, for his future course of life—the vocation of a clockmaker and jeweler. Since this blessed country of ours exhibited to him, as well as to millions of others in the old country, a sphere of usefulness and enterprise, he came to America in 1836, and, walking the distance from Cleveland to Zanesville, he made this city his home. Poor as he had come he sustained himself by hard labor

at his trade, not ashamed of carrying his clocks on his shoulders or of conveying them on vehicles from house to house, from log-cabin to log-cabin, from farm to farm, treating his customers in an upright way, everywhere making the impression of honest dealings. "There have been few more industrious, more successful and more contented citizens than Mr. ———," is the testimony bestowed upon him in our daily papers by such as knew him in his business life. When his children grew up, he educated them also to hard labor in a useful sphere, and with their aid, under the blessings of God, he was enabled to build up a business, the name of which is favorably known in the mercantile world, and has grown into magnificent proportions. The life of the deceased has, therefore, not been trifled away, as so many lives are, nor has it been spent in indolence, or in the pursuit of ungodliness and wickedness; but the brother whose remains rest in the coffin before us, has departed this life—and herein all agree that knew him—as a good man, as a useful citizen, whose name the records of Zanesville will always delight to mention. He rejoiced, also, to see others prosper. He aided this place in its useful enterprise, and did his share in advancing the lawful interests of our city and country. He was one of those men upon whom a commonwealth looks as its ornaments, and whom we are glad to meet in their homes, in their offices, on the streets, in the assemblies of public men, in the councils of the aged. His conversation was of a strictly moral and becoming nature. He was a comforter of the poor and liberal toward the indigent. He would not sacrifice the prin-

ciples of truth and honor for the sake of sinful gain and pleasure. He watched anxiously not to offend his fellowmen, young or old, by evil habits or wicked doings. Therefore we may truly say: He finished his course; he walked the path which God in His providence had marked out for him, till God released the weary pilgrim and let the mainspring of the clock of his earthly life run down.

Your husband and your father, now sainted, as we hope, leaves you the heritage of a good name. This is a great honor to the bereaved family, that the name they shall bear is not sullied, but shall accompany them as a star on the paths of their future life. To know that he whom we bury has lived the life of the righteous, and that his death was the close of a good and useful sojourn on earth, is an inheritance more illustrious than gold or silver, or real estate.

II.

But, by the grace of God, we are entitled to proclaim over the coffin of our beloved father also these words: "I have kept the faith." What faith? The faith in himself and his own moral perfections? Indeed not! That would not be the faith of which St. Paul speaks. I have kept the faith means the genuine Christian faith; the apostolic faith, laid down in the writings of the prophets and apostles. The faith that all men, however good their lives, however seeming their moral accomplishments, are lost by nature in trespasses and sins, are under God's wrath and condemnation and

worthy only of temporal and eternal punishments. The faith that there is none other God in heaven and on earth than the living God—Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three persons in one undivided and inseparable essence. The faith that the Bible is the only true source of religious knowledge, and was inspired, in the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, by God himself. The faith that Jesus Christ is true God born of the Father from eternity, and also true man born of the Virgin Mary, our Lord, and the only Mediator between God and man, who redeemed, secured and delivered us from all sins, from death and the power of the devil; not with silver or gold, but with His holy and precious blood, and with his innocent sufferings and death, in order that we may be His, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness. The faith that we cannot by our own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, or come to Him, but that the Holy Ghost calls us through the Gospel, enlightens us by His gifts and preserves us in the true faith; in like manner as He calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth; in which Church He daily forgives us all our sins, because even Christians are not perfect, but sin much daily and deserve nothing but punishment. The faith that God will raise us up, and all the dead at the last day, and will grant everlasting life to all who believed in Christ. —That all this is most certainly true, was the faith which the apostle kept, and which was the source and secret of his holy and self-denying life. This was

also the faith of our departed father and brother. As his ancestors had suffered for this faith centuries ago in their native country and fled to Germany for a refuge, so our brother was not only reared in the tenets of the faith at school and as a catechumen, but he also kept this faith in the old country and in the new. To keep this faith, he and with him several others, some of whom have already passed to the other blessed world, and some few, gray with age, are still with us, organized this congregation, went through all the labors, and troubles, and afflictions of establishing a church on the sound basis of apostolic truth. If his heart clung to his business, it cleaved still more to the Church of Christ; and, as others with him, he was willing to devote his time and money and counsel to the interests of this congregation, which he assisted in building two churches, its own school and parsonage. He was an esteemed brother in the church and a member of good standing. He served his church in various ways as Deacon, Trustee, and Elder. His purse was open to the wants of the educational, missionary and charitable institutions of the Lutheran Church. And as he was a dutiful church member, he also conducted himself as a devout Christian with his family and in his daily walk. That the church and its glorious principles might be sustained and prosper; that his family should remain with the church, and all his children and grandchildren grew up as good Christians, this was his care and prayer. He and his spouse were not ashamed of making their home a Christian home, where the Word of God and the prayers of the saints

could be heard, and the books and periodicals of Zion might be read. And thus they lived a life of happiness and prosperity. They experienced the blessings of the Lord as in other manifold ways, so also in this so very important one, that all their children are with the church and willing to follow in the footprints of their sainted father. Thus our brother kept the faith. His faith was the secret of his exemplary life. Moreover he died in this faith. When he was taken sick with his last illness he was asked whether he thought he would recover again. "Perhaps," he said, "the good Lord Jesus will have me well again; if not, why He will come and take me home, and I shall meet my Saviour with the sainted throngs."

If, therefore, the unstained life of your husband and father is an ornament to you all, a jewel in the crown of your whole family, the fact that we have every reason to believe, our father and brother kept the true apostolic faith for a space of almost seventy-two years, must be our chief comfort at his coffin and grave, a comfort fraught with unspeakable peace and joy. But this brings before us the third stanza of the dying Christian's song of triumph.

III.

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me alone, but unto all them also that love his appearance."

The life of faith and righteousness has its blessings in some measure, already in this world. Where father and mother, sons and daughters are all agreed in the Lord Jesus and are content with the ways and doings of the Almighty towards them, where their resolution is firm in God not to yield to the pressure of sinful habits and associations, there a spirit prevails which is altogether lovely and sincere, and makes the home blessed to such an extent that the very hand of affliction and sorrow only unites the members thereof the more. If there is no place like home, it is only from the fact that Christian and sober parents make the home a bosom where their children, even when grown, like to nestle. This happiness our father and brother enjoyed. He not only saw his industry, his temperance, and prudence in his business rewarded by temporal blessings at the merciful hands of God, but he also lived a life of Christian peace and prosperity with you, the bereaved widow, and with you his children and relatives; and all who had an opportunity of being his guests, will bear him testimony that his house and home was indeed a Christian home.

But there is another blessing. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." God, who has given us, in His infinite grace, this temporal life for true enjoyment, who permits His own to be afflicted only in so far as is necessary towards the promotion of His honor and their lasting welfare, does not mean we should, as the atheists lie, be annihilated after walking His ways fifty and sixty

and eighty years. No, for all those who finish their course and keep their faith, there is laid up a crown of righteousness. The country welcomes home her sons who have staked their lives for its protection; the master rewards the faithful steward, toiling from morning till night; the heroic soldier and watchful worker of the Lord will not be deceived when he returns his soul to Him that gave it, whilst his body returns to dust. The pious and good children of God cannot, at their end, meet with the recompense of the unbelievers and of such as disgraced every virtue and trampled under foot the sacred rights of God and man. God—who so loved the world, the whole sinful race of men, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life—will not cast us out when we appear before His throne after the last struggle is over; will not cast us out on that final day of resurrection and retribution, but for Christ's sake bestow upon us the promised crown of righteousness. For surely God "will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: but glory, honour and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." Romans 2.

Though the life of the best Christian in this world is imperfect and tainted with impurities and sinful weaknesses; though our departed brother was also constrained by daily experience to lament his shortcomings and imperfections, yet on account of the perfect obedience and sufferings of the world's Redeemer, implored and apprehended by faith, the life here begun in weakness shall there be continued in perfection; the body that is here sown in weakness is raised in power. Immortal glory for every good work accomplished, the bright lustre of the heavenly realm for every good deed done in the name of Christ, is the crown of the righteous in their Father's mansions.

This, then, is the crown which, we trust, our departed father and brother has received, and which he will fully receive on the morning of the resurrection. This must be our joy in this present sorrow, our comfort in grief. He has departed from our congregation here to join the congregation above; he left your family here to meet its sainted members there; he quit his earthly toil to enter into the rest of God's people; he has been removed from the field of battle to mingle with the triumphant host. Let us, then, all receive admonishment from his faith and end, to continue in the course of an upright life; to hold fast the profession of faith without wavering; to fill the vacancy caused by his departure in the ranks of our congregation by renewed zeal and watchfulness. May the God of all comfort comfort the widow, the children and relatives of the deceased, and our church, and all them that loved and esteemed the departed brother and love the appearance of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

XLIV.

It is Appointed Unto Men Once to Die.

It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. Heb. 9: 27.

When we look about us on a beautiful spring morning, we see the world in its garment of youth. The earth is covered with a cloak of green, ornamented with flowers and plants of pleasant odor; the trees are laden with dark green foliage; in their boughs birds twitter and chirp the praise of their Creator; the animals bask in the warm rays of the sun; all seems young, all seems happy. Also man is delighted; the young rejoice at the coming of spring; the middle-aged hail the season by taking new courage and applying themselves with invigorated strength to their occupation; the old feel a new life throbbing in their veins—what a happy time spring is! Lost in revery over this scene, we never think of death, but at spring's heels follows summer with its harvest. And autumn advances stripping summer of its glory and charms; the trees of beauty are leafless; the birds hush; the north wind sweeps over the scene and turns life into death, and finally the blast of winter clothes nature in her shroud of death. This is repeated every year.

Man is not like this. He springs forth as a plant in spring, fresh and comely, and thinks that he has a great future, a long time, before him; but before he realizes it his life has sped away and death claims him

for his victim. The earth, all its glory, all its great promises, all its goods and gifts prove vain. Vanity of vanities; fleeting, evanescent things that perish, ere we have time to fully realize them. What is this life with all its happiness and enjoyment and pleasures and promises? What is this earth with its charms, its grandeur, its greatness, its honors, its beauty? What is man in his strength and greatness and honor and esteem and fame amidst all the things of the world? Solomon says: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity." Why? because these things perish; the earth and its glory wanes; our life sickers away—and man? Our text says of him: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." What an admonition for us! Let us consider for a few minutes that this saying,

IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MEN ONCE TO DIE,

teaches us

1) A fact, an undeniable fact.

2) A lesson, a great lesson.

"It is appointed unto men to die." It is decreed in the all-wise counsel of God for man to die. This decree is as firm as a rock, as firm as the foundation upon which this house rests, as firm as heaven and earth. For the same Lord that made heaven and earth and sun, moon, and stars, has said this, and therefore it is undeniable. It is "appointed," there is a time, an hour set for each and every one of us to quit this life, as it was for him whose lifeless remains

we surround at present. Hence learn in the first place, dear friends, that we know not when we shall die, the place is not told us. Learn secondly that we know not how we shall die; one may die by accident, another by disease, a third in another way. But above all we know not when we shall die. It may be years to come, it may be next year, next month, next week, to-morrow or even to-day. You can not tell, nor can I tell. Yet we know that we must die. Look at death's work. The infant, closely clasped to the mother's bosom, is torn from her tender embrace; the child, the father's pride, the mother's hope, one week well and hearty, the next preyed upon by this fiend, death; the young man, full of vigor and in the enjoyment of health, full of hope and looking with searching eye into the future, is suddenly overcome and plunged into the yawning gulf of eternity; the maiden on the brink of womanhood, vivacious and lively, is suddenly bent and broken by the wilting blast of disease; the man, in the strength of years, is one day well, the next a lifeless, cold, clammy corpse, one minute on earth, the next in eternity; old age, constantly pursued by this foe, finally is caught in his tight grasp. O death, thou art horrible! And we all must die, all must consent to follow thee into the dark valley. For "it is appointed unto men once to die." And then? Ah, then the judgment.

This judgment takes place after death; therefore it is not in this life, but after it. As soon as the soul leaves the body it goes to this place of judgment, where its fate is decided forever. It will be fixed in

one of the two eternal states, heaven or hell. This judgment will be pronounced according to righteousness, justice, and truth. There will be no mistake, for it is God that will pronounce it. He is infallible, just, and righteous. He shall judge according to the deeds done in the body, man's deeds and words done and said on earth. In God's court of justice all our actions will be examined, all our words will be weighed, and judgment rendered, whether they be good or bad. Man on earth thinks if he hides his deeds so that no one sees them it is well, but alas! how alarmed will he be on that day! Actions good and bad, honorable and disgraceful, all, all shall come up before the Judge. All words spoken by us, slandering, defaming, hurting and insulting to our neighbor, shall there be judged in righteousness and truth. O judgment, judgment!

> O what fear man's bosom rendeth,
> When from heaven the Judge descendeth
> On whose sentence all dependeth!

And after judgment follows either eternal life or eternal death, either heaven or hell. Those that shall be proclaimed righteous, shall go away into everlasting life, into heaven where they shall be free from all sorrows, all pains, all tears; where their mouth shall be filled with laughter and their tongue with singing; where they shall rest from the labors of their hands and their works shall follow them. It is a life of happiness and bliss indescribable, for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into hearts of

men, the things that God has prepared for them which love Him. Happy the man that will stand in the judgment and be pronounced righteous, for then all this awaits him. The men that will be declared unrighteous, whose evil deeds and unforgiven sins justly condemn them, shall be cast into hell, the place of eternal torment and woe,—a place where they shall be an abhorring to all flesh, where they shall have no rest day nor night, where their thirst is not quenched, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; where the smoke of their torment ascendeth up from everlasting to everlasting; where remorse, resentment thirst, all the sorrows and woes of life shall be upon them. And they shall suffer not a day, nor a week, nor a month, nor a year, nor ten years, nor a hundred years, nor five hundred years, nor a thousand years, nor ten thousand years, nor a hundred thousand years—how glad would the damned in hell be if a hundred thousand years would end their torment—but for eternity, the punishment will have no end! no end! no end! And this is certain, for the God of truth, who is infallible and inflexible, says it, and hence it will surely come to pass, for "it is appointed unto men once to die and after this the judgment."

II.

What do these two facts teach us? Since we know that we must die, let us always be prepared for death and judgment, for so much—the eternal destiny of the soul—is at stake. The great lesson that we learn

is the importance of the question: "Am I ready for death and judgment?" This is the question, the awful question, the tremendous question I ask you today. Supposing one of us were to drop dead without warning, would he be ready to meet our God and receive judgment at His righteous hands? Then what is more important, dear friends, than to know that we are ready. What is earth with its vaunted treasures? what a life of twenty or fifty or seventy years? what does it amount to? We rush on towards that goal, death, with terrific velocity, as if we were flying away. On we go to the other world; every week, every day, every hour brings us nearer to the end, nearer to the judgment. Or supposing that every desire of yours would be gratified, every passion satisfied, every wish fulfilled, that the earth would be yours with its gold and silver, and Jesus Christ asks you: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Then, let us save our soul.

The Bible tells us how. It teaches that all men are sinners; that the law which God had given man, according to which he was to live, has been shamefully transgressed by him. Instead of keeping the law man has broken it, and doing anything against the Ten Commandments of God is sin, for which man deserves punishment. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." All are sinners, all deserve eternal death. And all of us would have to be eternally lost, had not God had mercy on us and sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, into the world and punished our sins in Him. Jesus Christ was "wounded for our transgressions, he

was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with His stripes we are healed." He suffered for us, He died for us; we deserved death for our sins, but Jesus Christ, God's Son, took upon Himself our punishment. "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all." All our sins

On Him were laid,
In Him were paid.

Jesus "was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification." And of Him it is said: "His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Jesus, Saviour of sinners, that is His name.

This salvation, this deliverance from sin and death, you are to accept in true faith; you are to believe this with your heart. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Faith is needful, for "without faith it is impossible to please God." And abide in the faith until death, for "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Damnation upon all unbelievers and salvation upon all true believers, is your God's declaration.

Now, dear friends, take this lesson home with you and think it over. Ask God for grace that he may lead you to the knowledge of sin, to the repentance of sin, and to the forgiveness of sin which is to be had alone by faith in Christ. Believe the Gospel, believe in Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. Your life on

earth will be happy, it will be filled with all blessings, and when death approaches and judgment comes, you need not fear, for death cannot harm you, and judgment will pass you into heaven. Oh, may your dying prayer be:

I fall asleep in Jesus' wounds,
There pardon for my sins abounds;
Yea, Jesus' blood and righteousness
My jewels are, my glorious dress;
Wherein before my God I'll stand,
When I shall reach the heavenly land.

God grant this for Christ's sake. Amen.

XLV.

Faithfulness Unto Death.

Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Rev. 2: 10.

When the announcement was made some time ago that our brother, now departed, was taken seriously ill, a feeling of uneasiness seized many members of this congregation. The departed had at one time ranked among the foremost members of this congregation. An early settler in our city when it was still a small town, he had with others become instrumental in the establishment of a Lutheran congregation at this place. His excellent knowledge and finely discriminating judgment soon caused him to be entrusted with important offices in the congregation. For years he held the office of elder, and discharged the functions of

that office with rare tact. He was sent to represent this congregation at synodical conventions. Everybody thought well of him and put the greatest confidence in him. He was a light and a pillar of our congregation.

Then came a reverse. Owing to misfortunes of a private nature and to wordly connections which had not been kept under proper control, our brother became lukewarm. His pew remained vacant many a Sunday. Finally, we were apprised of the fact that he was no longer one of us. Years passed without any change, excepting that we would notice that our hopes for his return to us became fainter, as he became deeper entangled in his worldly ways. Many a sigh was heaved for him during those years, and many a prayer sent up by his former brethren to Him who can turn the deceitful and perverse heart of man. But he never did enter this church again, until to-day he is brought here a corpse.

The feeling of uneasiness, therefore, of which I spoke before, had just grounds. How happy, then, can we be to-day on being informed that all has yet turned out well with our truant brother. He has charged me to announce to the family of faith of which he was at one time a cherished and esteemed member, that by the grace of God he has been brought to a live sense of his sad fall and the ruinous consequences thereof to himself and others, and that mercy was vouchsafed him once more in his last weeks for a rising from his fall. He has died believing that Christ has forgiven him, as He forgave Peter.

I wish to speak to you to-day on a subject which was discussed between our departed brother and myself on the last night of his earthly life, before I administered the Lord's Supper to him in the presence of the elders of our church, who had been his companions in the early years of his life. I wish to speak on

FAITHFULNESS UNTO DEATH,

And to show

1) What faithfulness unto death is;
2) How it is attained;
3) What is its reward.

I.

The words of our text are from a letter of Jesus to the pastor of the Christian Church at Smyrna. In this letter, which was dictated by the Spirit to the Apostle John, Jesus informs the congregation at Smyrna that He is observing them with watchful eye: He has beheld its works, its tribulations, its poverty, its temptations, its dangers. Moreover, He announces to the congregation events still in the future; suffering, diabolical persecution, severe trials. He bids the congregation not to be afraid, and adds: "Be thou faithful unto death." The connection in which these words occur at once makes plain their import.

Faithfulness, such as Jesus requires, is a virtue of believers which consists in clinging to Him through every adversity of life, and in conscientiously performing His work until He says, It is enough; come home, my servant.

But why should this virtue be especially enjoined upon Christians? you ask. When a person becomes a Christian, does he not become such to stay? Most assuredly, beloved. Christianity is a man's final choice, made in this life for the life to come. Whenever this choice is sincerely made it decides, once and forever, the chooser's fortune here and hereafter. He who comes to Christ out of this world of sin, burns every bridge behind him. He has done with the world. He has renounced his old master. He has chained his flesh.

But world, devil and flesh have not done with him. The Christian whom Christ by His Word of grace has reclaimed from bondage, is regarded by his former masters as their property. The very fact that Christ has taken the Christian from them, makes the Christian appear all the more valuable in their eyes. They will fight with their combined strength for his recovery.

They know all his weak points, for they have observed him formerly, and he must move in closest proximity to them while he lives. They are able to calculate to a nicety what effect either the good or the evil things of this life will have upon him. They watch their opportunities. They will bait him with earth's glory; they fondle up to him with the caresses of the flatterer's tongue; they allure him with pleasure's fell cup. Again, they will goad him with a sense of his shortcomings, and vex him with his misfortunes and lash him with despair in his darkest hour.

Under such circumstances the Christian is to remain faithful. What that means in any particular moment of life, the attending circumstances themselves must determine. At all times it means that a Christian must set his face like flint against these hellish assailants, spurn pleasing offers, denounce their hideous suggestions, and laugh their mad rage to scorn. "I have chosen Jesus, His Word, His Sacraments, His Church, His Heaven; thereby I will abide!" he tells his assailants. "You can neither tempt me nor intimidate me. You can give me nothing that I desire, nor take anything from me that I should grieve over. Jesus is my all-sufficient portion."

That is faithfulness. Now, imagine a life spent in such conduct, from the baptismal font to the last communion, and you have faithfulness unto death. At the time when our text was written, the words "unto death" had also another meaning; they meant as much as "at the risk of your life." If a Christian at any time should be placed before the terrible alternative of either abjuring his faith in Christ or forfeiting his life, faithfulness demands that he must choose the latter. He shall then say with Luther:

"And take they our life,
Goods, fame, children, wife,
When their worst is done,
Yet they have nothing won:
The kingdom ours remaineth."

That is faithfulness unto death.

Are there any such Christians in existence? you ask. I confess that I know of none. There are de-

grees of faithfulness among the disciples of Christ, but the perfection of faithfulness is not reached by any one. Not all Christians turn Judases; not all choose the way of Demas; not all commit Peter's sin; but even in his Johns and Andrews the Lord finds much which he must in mercy overlook. It is a sad fact, but it is a fact. We are all guilty, in a different form, perhaps in an imperceptible degree of that sin which weighed so heavily upon the soul of the departed; and I have no doubt God has placed the dear brother once more into our midst to warn us: "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall. Be ye faithful unto death!" My brethren, if you could have been witnesses as I was of the remorse, the bitter shame, the relentless self-accusations of our departed brother, you would feel, as I do now, that these few words of Christ: "Be thou faithful unto death," are words before which every heart must quail.

II.

Upon faithfulness unto death, however, depends the crown of life. In view of this fact we ask with fear and trembling: Who then can be saved? The Saviour's answer to this question, given on a different occasion, applies also here: "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible." In other words, faithfulness unto death, wherever it is found and as much as there is found of it, is a gift, a work of grace. The fact that the Saviour demands it of His Christians does not indicate that they must pro-

duce it, but that it will be produced in and from them. They shall be faithful, not render themselves faithful. When God blessed the new earth and said to all the forms of vegetable and animal life: "Be ye fruitful," He did not impose a task upon them, but merely referred to conditions which He had created in them. It was given every tree with the very fact of its existence, to be fruitful: it is given every Christian in and with his new birth by the Word and Baptism to be faithful. The life of a Christian after his regeneration is a development under grace of every gift and virtue which is given him with the bestowal of faith. When God makes a Christian, He makes a faithful Christian, one faithful unto death. He in whose hands lay the first beginnings of our new life, is also its divine Guardian and Preserver through all stages of our growth in grace. Christ is the author and finisher of our faith. In ourselves we find no faithfulness; even when we have done all, we must profess ourselves unprofitable servants; but in Him we have all that we need to arm us for the fight, to cheer us in our weaker hours, to rouse us in our fatigue or security. The more we become convinced that this faithfulness unto death is not in us, the more earnestly we should look for it in Him, call for it from Him, take it out of His hand, whenever He cheers us with the promise of His help in the sermon or in the Sacrament.

It is when we look at this text with the clear eye of faith that it begins to shine with a mellow, soothing light, and to radiate warmth into our hearts chilled with the blast of this world's trials. He who speaks

these words knows us—knows us better than we know ourselves,—has known, yea foreknown us in Himself, before we had breath and being. When He chose us out of a mass of sinners, He chose us unto faithfulness to the end. The gift of final perseverance was given along with our election unto life. Through armies of devils, through labyrinths of temptations He purposed to lead us, and the gates of hell should not prevail against us, and no one could pluck us out of the hands of the Bishop and Shepherd of our souls. Therefore we fear not; as little as the tree in the orchard worries over the harvest to come, as little shall we worry over the end, if we make Christ our guide to that end. It will be all over with our confidence, as soon as we look at our own ability. Then we will look at the corpse before us and ask: May not I also fall from grace? Who knows whether I may not some time forsake my church? Yes, who knows? We have no reassuring answer to that question. But, I say, look unto Christ; the certainty of your salvation is in Christ. Has He not finally saved also this brother? When he forsook Christ, did Christ forsake him? Has not Christ in a wonderful manner given Him faithfulness unto death?

III.

In that case, you will say, there is really no merit to be ascribed to man's faithfulness, and the crown of life which Jesus promises in our text cannot be regarded as a reward earned by any effort of the person receiving it. 'Tis even so, and 'tis well that it is so.

We shall enter heaven on the terms of mercy, not of worthiness; not because we have been so good to Jesus, but because He has been so good to us. Not our own achievements the Lord shall crown at the end of our course, but His matchless work of grace in us. By the crown which He will place on our heads Jesus will verify our faith in His promises, not pay us for our works. The part which we shall play at that scene of coronation will be that of wondering lookers-on. We shall not be able to understand how it is possible that so much unworthiness, so much truancy, so much forwardness, so much obstinacy, of which we know ourselves guilty, should be crowned. We shall feel like asking: Lord, what doest thou? And when He mentions events in our life with which He has been well pleased, we shall interpose our bewildered: Lord, when did we these things unto thee? We had expected to barely gain admission to the courts of praise, and should have counted it a priceless privilege to be door-keepers in the house not made with hands, and lo! He leads us out in the full glare of the never-fading light, and makes a show of us in heaven. We knew that we would arrive at the portals of the bridal chamber naked, ragged, maimed, halt, just as we had been brought in from the filth and the wear of this life, and behold! He takes us by His hands, and as He deposits the crown upon our brow proclaims in the mansions of bliss: This is my well-beloved, who has come through much tribulation, and has washed his garments in the Lamb's blood. And then the seraph strikes into his jubilant harp and the celestial choirs take up the strain

of the mercy never-ending, the grace abounding which has surpassed all our sinning, and our heart swells with the tide of the song, as we pour out, in words that exceed utterance, our fervent thanks to the Redeemer, who kept us when we fell, raised us, reclaimed us, and in our last moment gave us strength to be faithful to the end.

May such be our fortune, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

FOR EXTRAORDINARY OCCASIONS.

XLVI.

Under What Circumstances is the Desire to Die a Pious Desire?

I would not live alway. Job. 7: 16.

A life-long sufferer is borne to his resting-place to-day. A body racked with pain and distorted has at last received surcease of all its woe. A soul, moreover, that was often bruised with the blows of fierce internal conflicts, has found peace. Death seems, in this instance, to have lost much of its frightful exterior: it has come in like a divine benefaction, bringing relief after human skill had long ago surrendered the task of alleviating the sufferer's pitiful condition as a hopeless one. Like a bright sunset after a stormy day, when the murky skies are rolled up into cloud-banks on the far horizon, and the roar of the storm has ceased, and the waters lie smooth and calm, so has been this sufferer's departure out of this world and life, of the joy and delights of which he had tasted scarcely any, while he had sounded its depths of misery to the bottom.

In the lives of men such terrible complications arise at times that it seems legitimate to wish and pray for the end. True, "life every man holds dear," but when that life is one continuous round of agony and torture, when its practical usefulness is destroyed, and a person is become a source of discomfort to others

and a loathsome burden to himself, it seems folly that he should nurse his former affections for this world, and not court death. There are men who would even advise a violent snapping of the silver cord. Some religions teach self-destruction under certain circumstances to be a virtue. Heathen and infidels have eulogized such acts; and to our amazement we even find Scripture cited in defense of that disgust of life, which finds vent in word and deed, so often in our day. Job, the great sufferer, and the apostle Paul are pointed out as men who held the view that life is not worth living, and death should be coveted, especially when a person is in misery. Yea, it is claimed that the church has reiterated this belief in the hymn of one of her poets:

"I would not live alway; I ask not to stay
Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way;
The few lurid mornings that dawn on us here
Are enough for life's woes, full enough for its cheer."

Now, the thought that a person may justly end his life by his own hand is so plainly against the teaching of Scripture, that we shall refuse to notice it. But what about the wish to die—is that also un-Christian? The present occasion invites an investigation of this subject, inasmuch as the circumstances, under which our departed friend suffered and died, furnish us with a commentary in fact on the view that the wish to die is a Christian wish. I shall, with the gracious assistance of the Spirit, attempt to set forth:

UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES THE DESIRE TO DIE IS A PIOUS DESIRE.

It is such

1) When it does not proceed from an unsubdued passion of the flesh;

2) But from the ardor of sanctified hope.

I.

It is, indeed, one of the illustrious saints of God whom we hear speaking in our text: "I would not live alway;" but just at this juncture in his life Job serves as a warning example to us. Job was provoked when he spoke these words. The speech of Eliphaz the Temanite was rankling in his heart. And it is true, Eliphaz had proven a sorry comforter. He had advanced this view, that Job's sufferings were marks of God's anger against Job; for no righteous person would be made to suffer like Job. This drew from Job a passionate complaint, that in addition to his loss of fortune, children, health and the apostasy of his wife, he had also to receive incrimination and rebuke from his friends, from whom he might have expected commiseration and comfort. In this violent outburst Job even spoke against the ruling of God, whom he now regarded as his enemy, and hence concluded that it were best to get rid of all his worry and misery by death. Here our Lutheran commentators add this warning note: "Such words all proceed from inborn impatience and disobedience, because the old Adam

in us will not submit to the will of God, but always proposes for itself other ways and measures than God appoints."

God in mercy overheard Job's wish; He did not fulfill Job's passionate demand, and when afterwards He had reasoned with Job, the latter confessed: "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further."

We gather from this that the disgust of life which occasionally seizes also Christians must be examined as to its motive. It will not do to throw down your work in a fit of anger and despair and wish yourself dead. And though this wish may be expressed in the language of Christian piety, we must beware lest our flesh and the devil deceive us by a mock devotion. Scripture in thousands of places exhorts suffering Christians unto patience, and arms them under their crosses with the cheerful assurance of God's succoring presence. It makes their very trials a link in the chain of divine foreordination, when it reminds them that all things must work together for good to them that love God, to the called according to his purpose. It emphasizes the sufferings of believers by their likeness to the Saviour's sufferings. And it parades in the catalogue of heroes of the faith in the eleventh of Hebrews many a noble cross-bearer who plodded faithfully to the end of his road without murmuring.

Yes, the desire to die is frequently a protest of the flesh against the measures of our heavenly Father for

our spiritual advancement. Afflictions are educational means of God, and He alone knows how much of it He must apply to each of us. He knows where He must place the chisel to strike off some unevenness, in order that the likeness of Christ may appear in us; where to apply the pruning knife that shall purge the branches of wild growth. He knows how much He must beat the lump of clay to deliver it of its baubles of vanity, before He can begin to mould; and how often the pestle must go down on the spice in His mortar to cause it to yield its fragrance. The flesh may chafe; and the will be roused to rebellion; the tongue may utter blank folly: friends may pour oil into the fire by their ill-advised judgments and Satan may fan the flames with his hellish suggestions, but He must keep right on till His purpose is accomplished.

Blessed is the person who can cheerfully submit to God's refining process; who can be still and wait to see God's salvation; who can resign himself in all his sorrows and pains to God and say with the psalmist: "My times are in thy hands." Such a person will recognize at once what the devil purposes when he suggests an ending of life's sorrows by violent means, or inspires disgust with present conditions and fills the lips with complaints.

In our departed friend there has been witnessed a wonderful power of resignation. I have never heard him grumble, and when once he cried out in fierce pain and I leaned forward to listen whether he expressed a wish, he was muttering the Lord's Prayer with his teeth set, as if in defiance of pain and death.

Whenever he felt easier, his conversation was pleasant and trustful. His bed of suffering resembles a battle-ground on which he fought out many a battle, and the grace of God permitted him to come out victorious. He has taught us a striking lesson, and to teach us that lesson, I have no doubt, was one of the purposes the Lord had in extending his suffering through so many years.

But our brother also desired death; yea, he prayed for his release. How this was done, I desire to show in the second place.

II.

Scripture speaks of the children of God in this present life as of pilgrims. It says: "Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Heaven is the Christian's fatherland. While he is still in the flesh, he is not at home. He is a wanderer abroad in a strange country among strange men, with whom he cannot associate. This being so, the Christian is at times seized with what the Germans have beautifully called "Heimweh," a longing to be home, an intense feeling to leave this world with its sin and sorrow, and hurry heavenward to his Father and his sainted friends. This feeling varies in intensity in different Christians, but they all have it. Sometimes it passes through our mind in the twinkling of an eye: the thought comes of that vast change from heaven to earth, and is gone as rapidly as it came. It was a mere thought, but it arrested our attention. Sometimes such thoughts come in rapid succession and under ever changing forms: details of the future be-

fore us are presented to our mind's eye, and we are carried along for some moments by them. Then again we have seasons when the mind becomes utterly forgetful of its condition and lives in another world. Splendid reveries are vouchsafed to the child of God who by faith and prayer maintains an intimate connection with His Father in heaven and his heavenly fatherland. It is a spiritual luxury, this "Heimweh" of the faith.

In his prison at Rome aged Paul was wrestling with it. He describes the dispute which arose in his heart thus: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor; yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." And in the same epistle he ascribes his longing for the heavenly home to all Christians when he says: "Our conversation is in heaven." Christians, in a manner, live in heaven while still on earth. Where their treasure is, there must their heart be: Christ, their treasure, is in heaven; He has gone to prepare a place for them; He will have his servants to be with him. To heaven their calling and vocation points them. Of heaven every sermon speaks to them. Their own faith in God's promises is bound to arouse and daily increase their desire for the realization of their fondest hopes. Hence, it cannot be otherwise than that a Christian should desire to depart and be with his Saviour. This desire is justifiable; yea, it is a necessary accompaniment of live faith. No one need feel ashamed of it.

It is the language of the Spirit within us speaking to us of the dear home. We are not ashamed of our earthly longing for home. We should regard our children as lacking in devotion to us, if when separated from the place where their cradle was rocked, they would not sometimes think of home. The soldier in the foreign fields, the sailor picking his way along far away coasts does not disdain the tear that steals into his eye, as on the still evening air there comes to him the song of his comrades: "Home, sweet home! There is no place like home!"

Yes, it is right for a Christian to become home-sick for heaven. It is right that he should realize that he must not make his home here. He must become loosened more and more from the fetters which still bind his affections to this world. But, mark you, this ardent longing of a Christian's hope never unfits the Christian for the active duties of this life, while this life lasts. It is begotten in him of faith, and faith always does God's will. Paul sacrificed his desire for departure, because it was needful to remain. He stayed out his time. So Christians yearn to be gone to their rest, but they will wait for the summons. The hope of reaching home may accelerate their spiritual pace, as the wanderer strikes out with greater vigor every time he thinks of the home before him. This hope cheers us on our way and causes us to beguile our very journeyings and sojourns in this strange country with songs of the happy land.

In this sense our friend desired to depart, committing the realization of his desire to God. He now has

his wish, and we wish we were sharers with him. We shall wait in patience for God's appointed hour.

Who, who would live alway, away from his God?
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,
Where the rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns.

Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,
Their Saviour and brethren transported to greet:
While the songs of salvation unceasingly roll,
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul?

XLVII.

Be Still, and Know that I am God.

(Funeral sermon delivered at the death of a young man killed by a falling tree.)

Be still, and know that I am God. Ps. 46: 10.

The end which our young friend met with, is seemingly a human accident, which might have been prevented or avoided by human foresight and care. So it has been spoken of and presented in these last few days, reported, printed and told time and again. But into the midst of this human speculation, the God of Life, He who says: "Return ye children of men," He without whose knowledge not a sparrow shall fall to the ground, not a hair from our head,—He speaks and says unto us: "Be still and know that I am God. I am the Lord and there is none beside me. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create

evil; I the Lord do all these things. (Isa. 45:5, 7.) Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6.) So also this evil, although it was brought about by men and in part by the deceased himself, yet it is not an evil stroke of a frowning fortune, a mere human accident, but a turn wrought by God; a disposition of His divine, holy, but good will. If we would have light and comfort in this awful visitation we must hearken to this voice and this one alone. Let me present this text:

BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.

1) As a word of consolation;
2) As a word of warning.

I.

"Behold and see if there be any sorrows like unto my sorrow!" Lam. 1:12. Why did such a blow fall on us? Why is he taken from us so early? Why so suddenly in a moment! Strong and sound did he leave us in the morning, mangled and torn, bruised and crushed were his remains brought back to us but a few hours later! Why such a terrible death? Why did he not die last winter when he was sick? Such questions and their likes are asked by many and undoubtedly also by those upon whom the blow has fallen. All such happenings and visitations of God are intended to make us ask questions, but not as much questioning God in His dealings but rather questions directed to ourselves. When they are directed to Him,

they sound, and often are, impudent, querulous, irritated, and very much like a demand or threat, containing a hidden accusation. But His answer is a soft one, firmly declining to enter upon such a discussion with us. It is an answer directing us to examine ourselves. "Be still and know that I am God." Answer me, my people! Have you lived in the real thorough appreciation and knowledge of the fact that I am God? the God who created man, gave him body? . . . the rightful Master, Lord of the living and the dead? Have you looked upon this person, dedicated to me in Holy Baptism, enlisted in my service at confirmation, as mine? Have you regarded him as a gift from me, or rather a sacred trust to keep for me? If your daily prayer has been: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" and if it was devoted, sincere, and true, will you not respect and honor my sovereign will now in his death? Did you know and believe: The Lord is at hand—what is the reason of your many "whys and wherefores?" Why has my call startled you so? Why is it so hard to convince you that I really did call him away? Thus quiet your own heart, considering God's majesty, and it will prepare you to receive His consolation. Is it really too early for him to have been taken away? He was as I can now say, a true Christian, and only recently assured his pastor of his sympathy and prayers. Should not the pastor then as well as any one of you protest and say: Such a member of the church should not be taken away so soon; he has a large sphere of usefulness, there are so few praying souls! Never! Let us recognize this truth: The

Lord is God. Thy ways, O Lord, are higher than ours, Thy thoughts past searching and finding out, and Thou wilt bring all to a blessed end. You, of course, will feel his loss more keenly, personally, and longer than any of us. But the more unselfish your love is, the more will you be satisfied and content, if it only be well with Him. Can any one then be removed too early from a world of sorrow, labor, temptations and woes; can one be delivered too soon from a deep, dark dungeon, from lingering sickness; can one then be delivered too quick from all evil and be transferred into God's glorious heavenly kingdom too soon? Did not St. Paul say: "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better?" True, you will admit, but not so suddenly, so unexpectedly, without a thought or warning of death, without a sigh or prayer for a blessed end! A quick and sudden death is not always an evil death. A thousand prayers will never bring a stubborn sinner and unconverted person into heaven. Only true faith from a repentant and sorrowful heart, a firm trust in Jesus Christ's vicarious suffering and death will save. And death can never come too sudden to such a person. Our brother was not unprepared. He had learnt all that was necessary in his last and dangerous sickness; the lessons then learnt on the bed of a painful and wearisome sickness he had not forgotten, when he recovered. His faith was strong and watchful. Thus did God prepare him and now He has taken him quickly, without sickness, through the dark door of death into the bright home of the Father. But you still urge the terrible manner of his death. Only

a death in sin and self-deception is terrible. The death of an old man of eighty years, though he live in ease, surrounded by wealth and luxury, dying painlessly, after a life without God and Christ is terrible. For: "He that believeth not shall be damned." The death of St. Stephen, who fell under the volley of stones hurled at him by his foes and murderers, his body crushed, bruised, bleeding, was a blessed death; for we read of it (Acts 7:60), "He fell asleep." St. Peter's death according to all accounts was a violent one, and yet it is spoken of as a death, by which he was to glorify God (John 21:19). The death of our brother therefore is terrible only to human eyes and feeling. The fatal stroke and falling asleep was one, and he also will surely glorify God, if his sudden and violent death only bring forth fruits of repentance and righteousness among us. Thus you will be satisfied, my Christian mourners, to praise God who removed your beloved one so graciously and without conscious pain or struggle, from death into life.

II.

This death is a warning and admonition to us all. From all that has been said, it is evident that no fault attaches to the deceased for his own death. In no sense can it then be called a judgment of God against the deceased personally. That is the reason why we all should stop to think and say: What does God tell me? To prevent unthinking, unfeeling, unkind and unjust judgments, let us all mark our text which tells

us: "Be still;" know ye that I am God; that God whom none can escape. As little as these men could stop the falling tree, as little can the combined strength of all men stop the Lord's uplifted arm. Let none of you boast of his own carefulness or shrewdness in avoiding trouble. Let none think: I am happy, for I need not run such risk, I am wealthy and independent, "for the Lord delighteth not in the strength of the horse, he taketh not pleasure in the legs of man. The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him. In those that hope in His mercy" (Ps. 147: 10, 11; Jer. 9: 23). Yea, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord" (Jer. 17: 5). Be still and know that I am God, who alone can bring to a successful issue what men begin; who alone disposes while men scheme and propose, the God whose will alone decides and turns all things. Our young friend had about made ready house and home and was looking forward to the happy day when he might bring to her home the wife; the fondest hopes were toward the day when she with him would say: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord"—when lo! in one moment all this is shattered! So God tells us in all our schemes and plots and plans, in all our undertakings: "Go to now, ye that say, To-day or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we will live and

do this or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil (James 4: 13-16). Let Christ Himself tell you what is the safest and best course (Matt. 16: 26; Mark 8: 36). Therefore, be still and know that I am God, a God at hand. He is a God near unto all, as a God of life and death and judge of the living and the dead. As such He is near to the old and young, the weak and strong, the sick and those in the prime of health, at home, abroad, at work or at rest, awake or asleep. In the midst of life we are in death. He is near unto us now with His word and Spirit, "Behold now is the accepted time" (2 Cor. 6: 2). Had our deceased friend tarried, his days of grace would have been cut off suddenly. But he heard and heeded. He freely confessed his Saviour, heard and learned the Word with gladness. Nor was he a hearer only, but a faithful doer. His piety was of the manly sort, sound and free from all fashionable faddism and sickly sentimentalism. His faith and piety gave him his true value and character, nor did it make him morose and peevish. All his friends and acquaintances will gladly bear me out in saying: Ever since he became a Christian he was even-tempered, friendly, sober, and firm. Therefore, be still and know that I am God, He who turneth the hearts of men as rivers of waters, who also is the God of all such who will separate themselves. . . . See 2 Cor. 6: 16-18. O Lord, our God, bless this bloody planting unto a lively growing. Let this death be a savor of life unto many for the sake of thy mercy in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

XLVIII.

Address.

(Address on the sudden death of a four-month old child.)

My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isa. 55: 8, 9.

It was but a few months ago when we were assembled here to be merry and glad with our friends. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it," so said the grandparents, relatives and friends when the child was baptized. To-day after but four short months we are here again, weeping with them that are sad and sorrowful. The Lord our God sends us many changes and vicissitudes. "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness" (Prov. 14: 13). At the occasion of its baptism we not only rejoiced over the child, but we offered for it many sincere wishes and pious prayers. We wished and prayed that it might increase in baptismal grace, grow in years, in wisdom and favor with God and man, we hoped that it would live to be a staff and support unto his parents in their declining days. But things came differently, much otherwise than we had expected, hoped or prayed. He died in the same year in which he was born. He died suddenly and in great pain. He saw not a single

spring or summer. Nor did he see much ease or experience much comfort, for weakness and pain was his lot nearly half of his days. However, let us not be distressed over his death, for we are told: (Isa. 55:8, 9).

But you ask, Can we enter into His thoughts? Can we search His ways? Are they not past finding out? Can we spy out His mysterious dealings? Are we permitted to ask: O Lord, our God, why hast Thou dealt with us in such a way? Thou art the lover of life, why hast Thou sent so early a death to this child? Thou hast been gracious unto these parents before and hast spared their other children to them, why hast Thou taken from them the youngest, weakest and dearest? Foolish questions these are, indeed. In heaven all these riddles and problems, which give us so much trouble and pain, will be answered and solved. But while we walk here below in the vale of darkness, shadows will often flit over us and obscure our paths, it cannot be otherwise and we must be satisfied with Christ's answer to St. Peter: "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." How then? How shall we be comforted until then? Shall I try to console you after the manner of the world, with common-place platitudes and empty phrases, such as this: Do not grieve and worry so much, you have other children and a nice family still remains; do not take it so hard for having lost the youngest. It was weak and gave little promise. Oh, how inane such phrases are! How repulsive to a loving mother's heart! The shepherd having 100 sheep dearly loves the lost one. He will leave the 99 and search for the strayed one. A

mother having a number of children does cling all the more to the one that is taken away. Should I offer to you another such superficial piece of consolation? "Time heals all wounds; after a short space of time you will forget the taking away of this little one." God forbid that this be true! What you forget so soon, you never really loved! Pictures under frame and cover may fade, but the picture which a mother and father carry in their heart, cannot be dimmed by time nor changed by passing circumstances. I should be ashamed to stand at this bier as your pastor if that were the best consolation I could offer to you. Thanks be to God! I have a far better one. It is none other than the same text which you heard four months ago: Suffer the little . . . (Matt. 10: 14.) What was the cause of your joy four months ago? This fact: That by baptism this little one had been born again, was made a member of Christ's kingdom, yea, that by it, Christ received and took it up into His arms, blessing it as His child. Though we knew it to be a new born infant and not strong, yet we knew that by this blessed washing it was made strong in the inner man. To-day our consolation is according to that same word, that by death it now enjoys the actual, personal communion with its Saviour into which it was baptized. If we understood and applied this text four months ago as meaning that being brought to Christ, the child might in its baptismal grace lead a long and useful life here below, and if our wishes centered there, let us today rest assured that God meant it in a richer and far better way than we did, He hastened away with its

soul to have it with Himself. Even though we do not know to-day God's special purpose, we are satisfied to know that of such baptized children is the kingdom of God; that from its mother's bosom and its father's arm, this child has been changed to Abraham's bosom and the care of its God and Saviour. Lift up your hearts, then, on high where Jesus is, unto the blessed heights of life and enduring light. What we here below behold with our eyes lying before us, is but the mortal frame, the house of clay; the immortal part, the soul, washed, cleansed and made spotlessly white by the blood of the Lamb, purified from spots and blemishes of all sin, is forever with the Lord. When such small and young heirs of heaven die, we do not lose them, they are sent on to their Father, so they may not be lost.

We bear away from this house only the precious seed, to be planted in God's Acre in corruption and weakness, that it may rise in glory, power and incorruption. While here below, his angels always beheld the face of the Father in heaven; now he himself beholds that face with them who are his companions. He is far better off than we. May God grant unto us a childlike faith that we may reach the heaven which is of such children and of such which become as children. A baptized infant cannot be lost; they all are saved by faith, without fail. With us it is different; with us it depends on our being steadfast in faith unto the end. Do you then believe? Have you saving faith? Well indeed it is with all such who do truly believe that there is salvation in none other than Jesus

Christ. You who were united to this child not only by ties of blood and relationship, but by faith, wipe away your tears, for you have the assurance that by this faith you will be re-united with this little one in the last day and with these words you should comfort each other. You parents may say contentedly, though under tears: "Behold, Lord, Thou hast called Thy child, and in Thy hands, graven through by cruel nails on the cross, we know it to be safe. We forbid it not! but gladly let it go to Thee, it is in God's kingdom. All our desire is towards Thee, therefore, we entreat Thee, suffer us not for any pains of death to fall from Thee, for Thine is the power and the glory, O Lord. Amen."

XLIX.

Address.

(Funeral address at the death of a man who died suddenly.)

He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness. Isa. 57: 2.

Who knows how near my end may be!
Time speeds away and death comes on;
How swiftly! ah! how suddenly,
May death be here and life begone!
My God, for Jesus' sake I pray
Thy peace may bless my dying day!

Yea, who knows how near my end may be! Do we not all feel the truth of this old hymn and the full seriousness and force of the warning contained in it, as we are now to accompany a brother to his last resting-place, who was with us sound, bright and strong as any, doing his work and pursuing his business but a few days ago? Swiftly, suddenly did death end his life. He was cut down in the middle of his years. Swiftly and suddenly it can come to any one of us as well; are you sure of having a blessed end? "My God, for Jesus' sake I pray Thy peace may bless my dying day." Truly, we all need to pray thus often, daily. The blood of Jesus Christ alone can insure to us a blessed end and make us partakers of joys which earth does not know. Only that person's end will be a death and departure in peace, whose sins were washed away here on earth by the blood of the Lamb; only he can die easy, who by faith has laid hold of the merits of Jesus Christ and by faith alone is justified before his God. Thanks be to God that we dare say so of our deceased brother. As far as human eyes could see he was prepared for death, and though it came suddenly, swiftly, it could not take him unawares, he had learned to pray: "My God, for Jesus' sake I pray, Thy peace may bless my dying day." Faith and trust in God was a living thing in him, and the Word of his God was his daily joy, comfort, food and preparation. Therefore we certainly are justified in applying to him the Word of God as found in Isa. 57:2: "He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in His uprightness."

"Each one walking in His uprightness," shall enter into peace and rest in their beds. Who are they? Who are the men of godliness? Who do walk in such uprightness as is demanded by God? Surely, there is none righteous, holy, not one, says the Scripture. God, however, demands: "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." This He demands of us who are by nature sinners and children of wrath, who are sinners by our own choice and volition as well. We who are dead in trespasses and sins, should walk in the newness of life, should turn and live. That is the will of God, even our sanctification. How is it possible that we be holy in all our doings, sayings and thoughts, in the likenesses of Him who made us? We cannot comply with His request nor obey His commands by our own strength and power, and yet it can be done, in His power, for it is God who turns us, He it is who raises us from a life of sin to a life of righteousness. He it is who alone by His power and Spirit through His Word and Sacraments works in us repentance, faith, true sorrow, and true conversion to our God; and He again it is who alone gives us strength to grasp the merits of Him who died for the ungodly, to cling to Christ Jesus our Redeemer and Mediator, who has been made unto us of God, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. (1 Cor. 1:30.) Only such as have this Saviour as their only hope and trust in life and death, who believe in Him that justifieth the ungodly, they that work not for pay, but in childlike trust and obedience, are just, upright, and

do fulfill God's holy will. Again, I say, thanks be to God that we can say, our deceased brother did know Jesus Christ as his highest joy, received Him by faith and found in Him rest, peace, and happiness. He did therefore also love the habitation of God's house and was always found where God's honor dwelleth. Gladly did he hear and learn the Word of God. It was to him a pleasure and relief from worldly work to behold the beauty of the Lord and enquire in His temple. (Ps. 27:46.) The testimonies of the Lord were a joy unto his heart in church and without. The Holy Sacrament was unto him a blessed eating and drinking, oft desired for comfort, strength, and consolation. The Scriptures praise as blessed such persons who hear the Word of God and keep it. He did hear it, keep it, and proved it by his walk in holiness and righteousness before God. He walked in uprightness as our text says. But he was the last person to claim it for himself. He fully recognized this truth that he was only a poor sinner, a real sinner, who could only live by grace, saying with St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." So he would glory only in his weakness, that the grace of God might the more abound. (1 Cor. 11:30; 12:5, 9.) Therefore you, my Christian friends, who mourn the death of your father whom you loved dearly, do not show that love after the manner of heathen who have no hope, but by following your father's faith and trust, imitate his simple devotion and reliance on God and His Word, follow him

also in such a regular and continuous use of the stated means of grace. Such a remembrance will be more suited to his memory than ostentatious wailing and tearful despair over his loss. Yea, let all of us promise anew at the grave of this righteous man, that Christ shall be our one and all, our highest joy, our dearest treasure. Let us receive Christ as the better enduring part, by a childlike trust, and find in Him that peace and contentment which the world cannot give. Thus will we also walk in uprightness, and the last words of our text will apply to us as well as to him: "He shall enter into peace." Peace we have here below in and through Christ Jesus, but that does not mean that we have entered into peace. While we are on earth, there will be fear and unrest on account of sin; perfect peace will not be found in the world and in us. Yonder in the city bright and fair, in heavenly glory, with Christ, we will enter into perfect peace, never to be disturbed by any disagreeable discord. Sweet, abiding peace, no pain! How unspeakably happy must they all be who have reached it! Many a pious soul anxiously, eagerly is waiting, yearning to be removed from this world of worry and woe, from this vale of tears. He that walketh in uprightness shall enter into peace, everlasting, divine, heavenly peace. (Isa. 32: 17, 18.) . . . "They shall rest in their beds." The grave is not a chamber of horrors for them; it is a sleeping chamber, a bed-room. None fears it or avoids it, but welcomes it after a day's hard labor. So they rest, it is not death, it is simply resting. Their life

and consciousness is not gone forever. They are resting in their beds and shall hear His voice and come forth, when the dawn of eternity breaks, when Jesus shall summon them to that new, unending life in the incorruptible, unfading immortal body of glory, to enter into proud palaces of peace and habitations of rest. It is a rest far different from that which they have in their beds, for it is the rest prepared for God's saints. Old things will then have passed away, and all things are new, all misery, woe, pain and crying are ended: joy shall be upon their heads forever, fulness of joy in the presence of God, world without end Yea, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors and their works do follow them." Amen.

L.

Address.

(Address at the funeral of two girls, who were killed in an excitement caused by the cry "fire" at school, which proved to be a false alarm.)

O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord. Jer. 22: 29.

If it be true that by the death of our brethren and beloved ones God speaks to the living, then the sermon He preaches to-day is especially powerful; it is so

overwhelming, strong, and appalling an occasion to all our feelings and senses, that it must be a deaf ear indeed and a heart of stone not to be touched, not to hear and understand God's word, spoken to the house of Judah by His prophet, Jeremiah, chapter 22, verse 29. God speaks to the families, so suddenly and sadly bereaved, to every individual who hears it, to our entire church and community. Two coffins are before us, they inclose all that remains of two young girls who gave rise to high hopes. Not by a long, tedious, painful, weary, and wasting disease, were they taken off, but by an accident, hardly to be explained, have they been cut down, in the bloom of youth, out of school are they carried away by the King of Terrors, Death. What has happened most of you know far better than I can tell. Nor have I any call to speak of it. I am here to speak on the part of our God, and therefore I call to you all: "O earth, Church! School! and Families! hear the Word of the Lord. Know ye that the Almighty hath wrought a sign in our midst." By it He would call us to repentance and true conversion. "For if the wicked turn not He hath bent His bow, and made it ready; He hath also prepared the instruments of death, and ordained His arrows to destroy." Sin and punishment, penalty and misfortune or calamities, conversion and grace are all closely connected. Therefore it will be well with him, who considers his evil ways before punishment comes, so as to be prepared for a visitation. Wise is the man who considers the clouds, while the sun is brightly shining. Therefore,

my friends, let us inquire after God and His word, while it is day for:

As the tree falls, so it must lie,
As the man lives, so will he die;
As the man dies, such must he be,
All through the days of eternity.

O ye Christians, hear ye the word of the Lord! Many a funeral procession passes through our streets; men, women, and children, the old and young, the rich and the poor die; and distressing cases are brought to our attention more or less vividly quite often, but the majority of people pay no attention whatever to them. But these present deaths speak so loud and forcibly of death, eternity, and judgment, that all must hear and stand stunned. But it will serve no purpose to speak of the sad accident, for if we are to derive good from the evil, blessing from the visitation, each one must smite his breast, remember his sins, confess them to his God, and seek pardon and peace through Jesus Christ our Saviour. This is especially the duty of such parents whose children escaped! Remember God's gracious, undeserved protection thankfully. He has given you a sign which has a definite meaning to you: Hear the Word of the Lord: Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. See to it that this be your first and foremost aim to teach them the way unto salvation. Have them first seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and make them rich in wisdom unto salvation. Have them study

and learn, first and above all other things, the Word of their God and the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. Do not despise the Bible Histories and the Catechism. But yourselves must be an example unto them, a beacon light on their way, by showing them how to use God's holy Word and the blessed Sacraments, lead them continually to the Saviour who received them by Baptism as His children, pray not only for them but with them, earnestly, daily, committing their bodies and souls to the Friend of children; intercede for them against the wiles of the devil, the world and the temptations of their own flesh and blood. Watch over them carefully so that, if He demand them back, you may say: "Lord, behold all that Thou gavest us: we have lost none of them."

And what shall I say to you, the companions, friends, school and classmates, who were in the same danger? You were witnesses of the suddenness of death, saw how quickly man's life may be cut short. Hear, O children, the word of the Lord: "Do not seek after the things of this world and life, do not set your hearts upon the vanities and pleasures of the times; be not filled with the lust of the flesh and eyes, but be ye filled with the Spirit, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above (Col. 3:1, 2)," things which death cannot take away, but which will make death sweet unto you. Strive after strong faith in Christ your Saviour, who delivered you from death and damnation. And if the spirit of evil, disobedience, tardiness, uncleanness, and other sins should come

upon you, then remember this day at school, when God came in a cloud of smoke and warned you, when the Lord your God went out unto you and gave you a proof of his power to save, telling you: " 'Be mindful of the Lord your God all your days and let not thy will be set to sin or to transgress His commandments.' " (Tobit 4:5.)

What shall I say to you, my dear friends, whom God has so bereaved? How speak to the hearts of fathers and mothers, who now stand as trees bared of a healthy limb by a stroke of lightning? What shall I say to brothers and sisters, who are now assembled to bury their companions and playmates? Hear ye the word of the Lord! Sympathy is soothing in pain, we know. You certainly have the warmest and widest heartfelt sympathy of the entire city and congregation. But that alone will not satisfy, it will not suffice to give you consolation. There is better sympathy than that of men! Hard indeed is the blow, heavy the stroke, and bitter the pain. But in spite of this God has only thoughts of peace for you. He is trying your faith and obedience by making you drink the cup of sorrows. As children drink that which your Father sends you patiently, saying: (Matth. 26:29) "O my Father," etc.

And if your quaking heart and quivering lips still stammer: "Oh, but so young, so suddenly, so terribly!" then remember that nothing can come to pass except by God's permission, nothing but the will of our heavenly Father can be done to us, who are His children by faith. Yea, more than that: He meant it

unto good for them. True, in but a few weeks they were to renew their Baptismal vow and promise to be true to their Saviour unto death, they and you lived in joyful hope and expectation of that day, when, behold! your faithful and merciful God anticipated it. He prevented the danger and risk of breaking their promises. He came a little sooner and took them to Himself in heaven. Think of this also that thereby they are spared so many and manifold temptations, dangers, and evils, which in our days are lurking for young girls. God has also spared them many worries and heart-aches, so much of care, a world of trouble and work, and has given them the inheritance of the saints in light. He has placed them into the hands of their Redeemer, out of which no man shall pluck them. And if you remember these things, ought you not to say with Job: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord?" We know, and this is our consolation, that they were children who knew and loved their Saviour, who knew and remembered their own sins, who also knew how to be rid of them and obtain forgiveness, and by faith had it. We are sure of their happy lot for the sake of Him whom they knew, in whom they believed. Therefore, I say again: Wipe your tears; for the sake of Jesus Christ are your children saved, and if this sudden and sad separation seem too sorrowful to bear, hear the word of the Lord: "Weep not! for they are not dead, but sleep." As your voice has often roused them from their sweet and peaceful slumber, so their Saviour's voice will raise them at the last day. They shall awake

and see the Sun of Life. We grieve not as they which have no hope. They did, and we do believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

LI.

Come and Let Us Return Unto the Lord.

Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. Hosea 6: 1.

"Though in the midst of life we be
Snares of death surround us."

The solemn truth contained in these words we see verified at the present moment. She who but yesterday was hale and hearty, lies before us to-day in yonder coffin cold and stiff and dead. And her unexpected death has caused profound sorrow, pain and grief. For twenty-three years she was the faithful helpmeet of her husband, sharing with him the joys and sorrows of life and helping him bear the burdens and cares of this present world. Her children she brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, setting them a good and Christian example in word and deed. For her Saviour and His kingdom she had a warm heart, taking an active interest in His church and its work. For all those who came in contact with her she had a kind and friendly word, so that she was beloved by all who knew her. And she, who was of such a sweet disposition. so gentle in her behavior, so attached to

her family, and so devoted to her Saviour and His church: she is no longer with us here on earth. Her spirit has flown hence, and her mortal remains are about to be consigned to the grave. No wonder that friends and relatives are sad and downcast. No wonder that hearts are bleeding and tears flowing freely. No wonder that such a large number of people are gathered together here to show the love and esteem in which they held her. Yea, verily, her death is a blow, not only to the family, not only to the immediate friends and relatives, but to our whole congregation. We all miss her, we are all grieved over her departure. And now to whom shall we look, and to whom shall we go, for help in this hour of affliction? Where can, where shall we find comfort in this sore distress? Yea, who can, who will heal our broken hearts and bind up our bleeding wounds? The prophet Hosea tells us to whom we should go, for he writes in the first verse of the sixth chapter of his book:

"COME AND LET US RETURN UNTO THE LORD; FOR HE HATH TORN, AND HE WILL HEAL US; HE HATH SMITTEN, AND HE WILL BIND US UP."

These words contain:

1) A sweet comfort.
2) A solemn lesson.

I.

"Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He

will bind us up." These words tell us who it is that has called our sister hence, who it is that has sent us this sorrow. It is the Lord, the sovereign Ruler of our lives; He, who is almighty and all-wise and all-good and all-merciful; He, who is the Author and Fountain of all life, the Creator and Preserver of all creatures. And has not He, who has given life, the right to take it again? and is not this a sweet comfort to know that the Lord has done this? that the issues from death belong unto Him? See, it is that Lord of whom Job says: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." It is that Lord of whom Hannah said: "The Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up." It is that Lord of whom Sirach says. "Prosperity and adversity, life and death, poverty and riches come of the Lord;" that Lord of whom the Psalmist says: "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass;" that Lord who said to Peter; "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter;" that Lord of whom Paul said: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." See, that Lord has torn us, that Lord has smitten us, and is it not a sweet comfort to know that it is He, the all-wise and all-good who has done this? that it proceeds from Him and not from Satan or some dark power of the deep? and should we not therefore humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God and bow in meek submission to His will, saying:

"Lord, as Thou wilt, deal Thou with me,
No other wish I cherish;
In life and death I cling to Thee;
O Lord, let me not perish.
Let but Thy grace ne'er from me part,
Else as Thou wilt; grant patient heart.
Thy will the best is ever"?

Yea, it is the Lord who has torn us, the Lord who has smitten us. And how does the Lord smite? how does He tear? The wicked, it is true, God smites in His anger and wrath. They refuse to accept His Son, they refuse to believe His Word, they refuse to do His will, and He smites them—smites them in His anger, as a punishment for their evil deeds—smites and tears them as a last resort to bring them to repentance, saying to them: "Ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth. Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver."

But His own dear children, His beloved Christians, God smites in love and not in anger, for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." It is the rod of correction, that rod of fatherly chastisement which He applies to them, for "the Lord will not cast off forever, but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." He Himself says: "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer." And is not this a sweet comfort to know that God

does not smite in His wrath, that He does not rebuke us in His anger, that He does not chasten us in His hot displeasure. Is it not a sweet comfort to know that this is a stroke of God's love? Hence

> "Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
> But trust Him for His grace.
> Behind a frowning Providence
> He hides a smiling face."

Remember that He says: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord, for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

But even more. Our text tells us that He who hath torn us will heal us, and He who hath smitten us will bind us up. What precious words! God will heal our wounds. Can we find a better physician? No, never. He, and He alone, can heal us, and He will heal us, for He gives us His word for it. And the oil and wine that He pours into our wounds, is His Gospel. That tells us: "All things work together for good to them that love God." That tells us: "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come." That tells us that Jesus is the resurrection and the life; He that believeth in Him, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Him, shall never die. That tells us that where Jesus is, there shall also His servant be. Yes, that tells us that the lines are fallen in pleasant places to them who sleep in Jesus.

Ah, the Gospel, the Word of our God, that is the rod and staff which comforts us. It comforted the departed, and should it not comfort us? It told her: "Fear not, for I am with thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." It told her: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." It told her: "The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore." Yea, it told her in her last conscious moments: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me." And should not this same word, which comforted her and which comes to us with the same power and the same consolation, comfort also us? Surely, for does it not tell us that we too have a Saviour, who is mighty to save? does it not tell us that also our sins are pardoned for Christ's sake, and that we, too, have a kind and loving and merciful Father in heaven? does it not also tell us that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us?" that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God?" that where there is no cross, there can be no crown? and does it

not thus heal our hearts and bind up our wounds? Therefore "come and let us return unto the Lord, for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up." These are precious words and full of sweet comfort. But they also contain a solemn lesson.

II.

The lesson which God teaches us is that life and death rest in His hand, that when He says: "Return, ye children of men," we must return, whether willing or not willing, whether ready or not ready. Therefore happy they who are prepared! The dear departed, as far as man can judge, was prepared. Let me hold her up to you as an example. She was known as a quiet and faithful Christian, who knew her Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Regularly did she wend her way to this house of God to hear the word of salvation. Frequently did she partake of the body and blood of her Saviour in the Holy Communion. Zealously did she work for the church, being an active member of our Ladies' Aid Society. Eagerly did she listen to the Word of God that was read to her on her sick bed. Patiently did she bear her illness and oh! how cheerfully did she submit to the Lord's will. Verily, all this reflected the faith that was within her.

Oh, happy, they, who, as she, are prepared to return unto the Lord. Are you prepared, my friend? Her unexpected death teaches you that ere long you, too,

may be laid to rest in God's acre, for "it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "Watch, therefore, for you know not what hour your Lord doth come." "Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when you think not." Yea,

"Watch! 'tis your Lord's command,
And while we speak, He's near.
Mark the first signal of His hand
And ready all appear.
"Oh, happy servant he
In such a posture found!
He shall his Lord with rapture see
And be with honor crowned!"

And how can you prepare for that awful moment of death? By sincere repentance and true faith. For if you ask: "What must I do to be saved?" the answer is: "Repent and believe the Gospel," or: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And would you know whether your faith is the true and saving faith, look at your life. Is it like unto that of the departed? Do you love your Saviour, do you love His word, do you love His church? Can you say with the poet:

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand"?

Do you pray to God:

"Order my footsteps by Thy word
And make my heart sincere.
Let sin have no dominion, Lord,
But keep my conscience clear"?

For this is the way to prepare for the world to come: by a true faith and a godly life, doing the work which God has given us to do, while it is day, before the night cometh when no man can work.

May, then, the departure of our beloved sister, be another cord drawing around us heavenward and fixing our hearts above where Christ is at the right hand of God. May we remember that our loss is her gain, and that therefore we should not sorrow even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will bring God with him, and so shall they ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

And you, my friends, who may now have vowed to the Lord to follow the example of the departed, to be more steadfast in faith, more fervent in love, more patient in tribulation, more instant in prayer, more zealous in the work of the Lord—to you I say:

"Then come before His presence now
And banish fear and sadness.

To your Redeemer pay your vow
And sing with joy and gladness:
Though great distress my soul befell,
The Lord, my God, did all things well,
To God all praise and glory." Amen.

BURIAL SERVICE.

I. AT THE HOUSE.

Wherever it is convenient, a hymn is sung, after which the pastor may say:

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Or:

To our God, who alone hath immortality, be honor and power forever and ever. Amen.

Dear brethren and sisters in the Lord:

Since God Almighty has summoned our beloved brother (sister) from this life of sorrows and, as we have reason to hope because of his (her) Christian faith, has advanced him (her) to his (her) everlasting rest, and since this dispensation of our Father moves us to sadness, let us in order that we may practice Christian moderation in our grief, hear the comforting words of (St. Paul) who writes thus:

(In Ordinary Cases.)

1 Thess. 4: 13-18.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe

that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Or:

Psalm 90.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath:

we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

(At Burial of Adults.)

John 11: 20-27.

Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house. Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth

and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.

(At Burial of Young Man or Boy.)

Luke 7: 11-15.

And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.

(At Burial of Young Lady or Girl.)

Matt. 9: 18, 19, 23-25.

While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshiped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, He said unto them, Give place, for the maid is not dead, but

sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when the people were put forth, He went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.

(At Burial of Child.)

Job 14:1-5.

Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.

Or:

Psalm 103:15-19.

As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children. To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

[N. B. If the funeral oration is delivered at the house, either the above should be omitted, or followed by a short hymn, after which should come the oration.]

Let Us Pray.

(Prayer ex corde, or one of the following.)

(At Burial of Adults.)

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank Thee because Thou hast taken our brother (sister) out of sorrow into everlasting rest. Dear Redeemer, we say with Job: "The Lord gave; the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;" and with the people in the Gospel: "He hath done all things well." Help us, dear Lord, that we may be comforted and assured that we have not lost our brother (sister), but have only sent him (her) ahead to heaven, whither we desire to go ourselves. Stablish in us the faith that this body, which lies before us in the helplessness of death, shall on the last day be raised up with power and great glory, and that we shall meet each other with Thee in the life everlasting. Grant us all, we pray Thee, Thy Holy Spirit Who shall put us in mind how soon we may have to depart, to the end that we may constantly hold ourselves in readiness by repentance and true faith, to follow Thee rejoicingly, whenever Thou shalt summon us out of this vale of tears into Thy heavenly kingdom, O Thou, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest forever and ever. Amen.

(At Burial of a Child.)

Lord Almighty, our heavenly Father, Who art a Father of all comfort and biddest us to mourn with them that mourn, we beseech Thy comforting grace for our afflicted brother and sister, who are now to

bear their child to its grave. Let them drink consolation out of the cup of salvation, bestow upon them the Spirit of Thy grace, and strengthen their faith, to the end that in trustful assurance they may abide the day of our final salvation together with all who believe and are fallen asleep in Jesus; and grant them and us a glad reunion with their child in everlasting joy and glory, when all believers shall live and reign forever with Father, Son and Holy Ghost, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Conclusion

by singing of hymn and the following:

They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. Amen.

II. AT THE CHURCH.

After the singing of a suitable hymn, the funeral sermon is delivered from the pulpit, or an oration from the altar. The reading of the obituary, where this is customary, may precede the sermon or oration, or follow after it. After the sermon follows a prayer.

(At Ordinary Occasions.)

Almighty, everlasting, and merciful God, heavenly Father, Who hast created all men out of dust in Thine own image, we humbly beseech Thee to grant us to consider at this burial our human misery, and to be

reminded of the end for which we were born into this life, of the frailty and perishableness of our life, and of our destiny; to the end that with all our heart we may renounce pride, vanity, self-will, and all false confidence, and may sincerely repent and amend our lives. Grant us to grow in faith and brotherly love in order that, when Thou shalt call us from this earthly life, we may be found to be faithful servants of Thee and may be received into eternal glory [with our departed brother (sister)]; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and honor with Thee and the Holy Ghost forever and ever. Amen.

(At Burial of a Child.)

Lord Jesus Christ, everlasting God and Saviour, Who didst receive little children, calling them unto Thee and blessing them, we are assured that Thou hast called also this child to Thy heavenly joy and hast blest him with everlasting life and salvation. Still the soul of his parents, brothers and sisters are grieved, dear Lord, and we mourn with them, because Thou hast so soon taken this child from them. Although they know that Thou intendest no harm to their child, in hurrying him out of this evil life, still they find it difficult to be still and resign themselves to Thy holy will. Assist them, we pray Thee, with Thy Holy Spirit, and strengthen their faith, that they may honor Thy dispensation and glorify it, even though they do not as yet understand it. We thank Thee, because Thou hast received this child in holy baptism and hast made him Thy child, hast born him again to the life ever-

lasting, and hast now given to him the promised inheritance, the kingdom of heaven. Therefore we are confident that this child is now at peace and rest with Thee. Help us, dear Lord, that we may turn and become as children, in order that we too may peacefully fall asleep and obtain the saints' everlasting rest by Thy grace and mercy. Amen.

Then shall follow:

Our Father who art in heaven; hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Holy and gracious God!
Holy and mighty God!
Holy and all-merciful Saviour!
Eternal Lord God!
Save us now from sinking
In the bitter pains of death.
From the true faith's comfort
Let us never fall away.
Lord, have mercy!
Christ, have mercy!
Lord, have mercy! Amen.

If the sermon at the church is preached after the burial, this service should close with collect and benediction. See at end of Third Part.

III. AT THE GRAVE.

After the coffin has been lowered, a hymn may be sung. Then the pastor shall say:

1 Cor. 15:42.

It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

(If an address is to be delivered, it should follow at this place.)

Since it has pleased Almighty God to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother (sister, this dear child), we now commit his body to the ground.

Earth to Earth;
Ashes to Ashes;
Dust to Dust,

in the certain hope of the resurrection unto eternal life when Christ shall change our vile body, that it

may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

May God the Father, Who has created this body;

May God the Son, Who by His blood has redeemed this body together with the soul;

May God the Holy Ghost, Who by baptism has sanctified this body to be His temple,

Keep these remains unto the day of the resurrection of all flesh. Amen.

The service is concluded by the singing of a hymn, collect, and benediction.

Collects.

1)

Almighty God, who by the death of Thy Son hast destroyed sin and death, and by His holy resurrection hast brought again innocence and everlasting life, in order that we be redeemed from the power of the devil, and also our mortal bodies be raised again from the dead to everlasting life, by the power of this resurrection to live eternally in Thy kingdom. Grant us that we may believe this firmly and with all our heart, and obtain the joyful resurrection of our bodies with all the blessed, through the same Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

2)

Almighty God, merciful Father, who on account of our sin sowest our corruptible and vain bodies into Thy great acre, we beseech Thy lovingkindness to keep our ashes, which have been sanctified by the blood

of Thy Son and by Thy Holy Spirit, and to raise us up after Thine image unto a glorious and incorruptible life, in order that we may behold Thy face in everlasting righteousness and may truly praise and glorify Thee by the victory and resurrection of Thine only begotten Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who with Thee and the Holy Ghost lives and reigns one true God, forever and ever. Amen.

3)

Lord God, Heavenly Father, Who hast taught us by Thy holy apostle Paul, that we must not immoderately grieve over our departed who have died in the Lord, graciously grant that together with all believers we may after this life obtain the joy everlasting through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

4)

(For Sudden Death.)

Almighty, everlasting God, by whose wrath man perisheth, and is carried away as with a flood, we pray Thee that Thou wouldst not take us hence in our sins, but teach us penitently to number our days, in order that death may find us prepared to enter into eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Benediction.

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee!

The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee!

The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace. † Amen.